



# Cigarette advertising may deter quitting: Conclusions from a content analysis of magazines

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## 1. Background

High smoking rates among 18- to 24-year-olds and the large proportion in this age group who desire to quit provide a compelling rationale for research about young adults' reactions to tobacco advertising and its role in perpetuating tobacco use.

Magazine advertising has been cited as evidence of tobacco marketing strategies designed to foil quit attempts. In an effort to counter New Year's resolutions, cigarette ads appeared more frequently on the back covers of magazines in January and February than in other months (Basil, Basil, & Schooler, 2000).

Designed and completed by an undergraduate research methods class at Stanford, this content analysis examined the frequency and seasonality of ads for alcohol and cigarettes in young-adult magazines from 1993-2002.

## 2. Sample

Magazines were selected for their popularity among young adults, reaching 1.5 to 5.2 million readers ages 18-24.

The sample was comprised of:

- all issues from seven monthly magazines (*Cosmopolitan*, *Ebony*, *Hot Rod*, *Life*, *Mademoiselle*/*Glamour*, *Redbook*, and *Vogue*)
- plus a random selection of one issue per month from six weekly or biweekly magazines (*Jet*, *Newsweek*, *People*, *Rolling Stone*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Time*)
- a total of 1,529 issues – 120 from each title except *Life*, which ceased publication in May 2000.

## 3. Methods

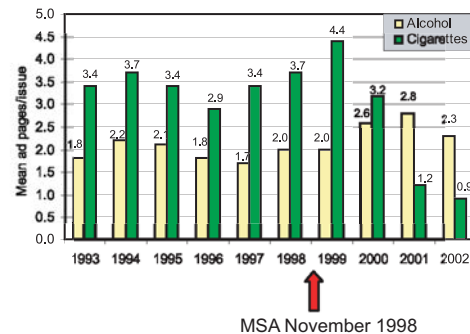
Undergraduates counted the number of ad pages for cigarettes and alcohol and categorized the back cover as an ad for cigarettes, alcohol, or other product. Although infrequent, ads measuring less than one full-page were counted as one.

Any ad that promoted a cigarette or alcohol brand name was counted, even if cigarettes or alcohol did not appear. The counts included marketing for cigarettes or alcohol through contests or events, such as concerts or vacation give-aways, but excluded ads about corporate good deeds, such as charitable contributions or youth smoking prevention campaigns.

Analyses compared the monthly rates of cigarette and alcohol ads as well as the prevalence of cigarette ads before and after the 1998 Master Settlement Agreement (MSA).

## 4. Results

Figure 1. Frequency of alcohol and cigarette ads in magazines popular with young adults, 1993-2002 (n=1,529 issues).



## 4. Results (continued)

Figure 2. Frequency of cigarette ads in young-adult magazines before and after the MSA.

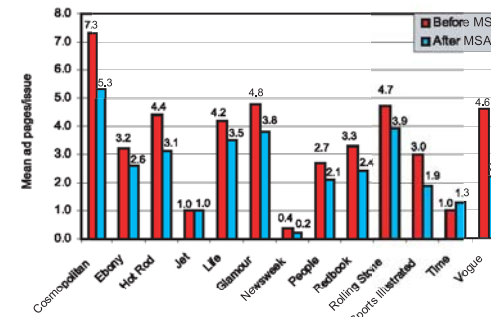


Figure 3. Seasonality in cigarette advertising before and after the MSA.

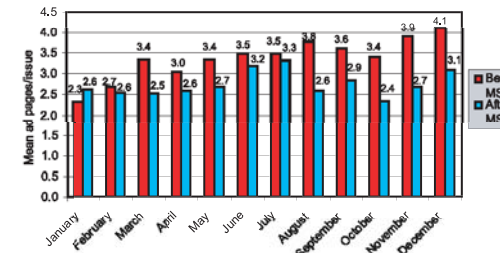
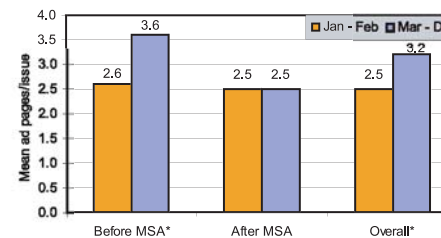


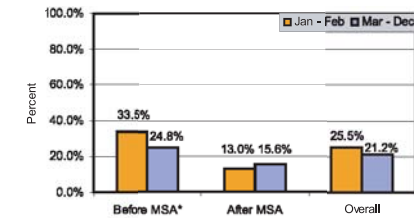
Figure 4. Frequency of cigarette ads in January-February versus other months.



\*Note: Means differ significantly at  $p < .001$ .

## 4. Results (continued)

Figure 5. Percent of back covers advertising cigarettes in January-February versus other months.



\*Note: Means differ significantly at  $p < .05$ .

## 5. Conclusions

Significantly fewer cigarette advertisements were found in young-adult magazines after the MSA (Figs. 1 and 2). The mean number of cigarette ad pages per issue decreased from 3.4 to 2.5 ( $p < .001$ ), and the proportion of back covers with cigarette advertising decreased from 26% to 15% ( $p < .001$ ).

Tobacco companies decreased cigarette ads in magazines in every month except January (Fig. 3), when ads might effectively deter quit attempts associated with New Year's resolutions.

Higher rates of cigarette ads on magazine back covers were found in January and February than in other months, suggesting that ad placement is designed to discourage smokers from attempting to quit. However, this pattern ceased after the MSA (Fig. 5).

Further examinations of seasonality in cigarette advertising should calculate density or otherwise correct for month-to-month variation in total ads and pages.

## For more information...

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