Marketing Cigarettes with Low Machine-Measured Yields

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INTRODUCTION During the early 1950s, scientific and popular articles that presented lung cancer research findings initiated what the tobacco industry termed the "health scare," as consumers became increasingly concerned about the potential health risks incurred from smoking. Companies initially responded to this health scare by introducing filtered products that were accompanied by advertisements with explicit health-related statements. For example, Viceroy® maintained that it provided "Double-Barreled Health Protection" and also claimed that it was "Better for Your Health" in ad copy.

In time, the industry became aware that explicit health claims had the undesirable effects of making health concerns salient or predominant in the minds of consumers, and encouraged consumers to use "healthfulness" as the criterion by which they judged cigarettes. Motivation researchers and other trade analysts advised the industry to shift from explicit verbal assertions of health toward implied healthfulness, an approach that incorporated the use of visual imagery (Pollay, 1989a).

January of 1964 marked the release of the first Surgeon General's Report on smoking, and this event reawakened public concerns about the potential health consequences of smoking. Tobacco manufacturers needed to reduce consumer concerns and the ensuing anxious feelings. Quitting was not an easy option for smokers because nicotine is highly addictive. Switching to a lower (tar and nicotine) yield cigarette became an attractive alternative for many smokers once they were convinced by advertising that this would be a meaningful step toward health and away from risk. Thus, there was a ready market for "new and improved" cigarettes, or at least for those that seemed to be that way.

This chapter will review recently released documents from the tobacco industry and its consultants, produced during litigation, as well as excerpts from the relevant trade press, for insights into the firms' intentions and actions in marketing their products. Particular attention will be paid to the period of the mid-1970s, the launch period for most of the new generation of low-yield products. It will be shown that advertising for reduced-yield products led consumers to perceive filtered and low-tar delivery products as safer alternatives to regular cigarettes.

THE 1950s

Filters Debut as Health Protection

Advertising during the 1950s promoted filters as the technological fix to the health scare. Filters were heralded with various dramatic announcements featuring 'news' about: scientific discoveries; modern pure materials; research and development breakthroughs; certification by the United States Testing Company; implied endorsement by the American Medical Association (see Figure 7-1); "miracle tip" filters; and descriptions of "20,000 filter traps" or filters made of activated charcoal, "selectrate," "millecel," "cellulose acetate" or "micronite" that were variously described as effective, complete, superior, and producing mildness, gentleness, smoothness, etc.

In 1958, for example, a press conference was held at New York's Plaza Hotel to launch Parliament® and its new filter, called "Hi-Fi" ("high filtration," as in high-fidelity state-of-the-art sound reproduction of the 1950s).

> "In the foyers, test tubes bubbled and glassed-in machines smoked cigarettes by means of tubes. Men and women in long white laboratory coats bustled about and stood ready to answer any questions. Inside, a Philip Morris executive told the audience of reporters that the new Hi-Fi filter was an event of 'irrevocable significance'. The new filter was described as 'hospital white'." (See Whelan, 1984, p.90)

The purported product benefit of this new filtration was obviously the perceived reduction, if not elimination, of cancer and other health risks. Health benefits were implied through various slogans, such as "Just What the Dr. Ordered" (L&M®), "Inhale to your Heart's Content" (Embassy®), "The Secret to Life is in the Filter" (Life®), "Extra Margin" (of safety protection; analogy to helmets, seat belts, and other safety gear— Parliament®), and "Thinking Man's Filter" (Viceroy®). Other slogans were more implicit, but still provided health inferences to consumers (See Pollay, 1989b).

If nothing else, the high technology attributes of filtration, and its ability to produce healthful conditions in other media such as water, were communicated (see Figure 7-2).

> "The speed with which charcoal filters penetrated the health cigarette market shows the effectiveness of a new concept. The public had been conditioned to accept the filtering effects of charcoal in other fields, and when charcoal was added to cigarette filters it proved to be an effective advertising gimmick." (See Johnston, 1966, p.16)

> "Claims or assurances related to health are prominent in the (cigarette) advertising. These claims and assurances vary in their explicitness, but they are sufficiently patent to compel the conclusion that much filter and menthol-filter advertising seeks to persuade smokers and potential smokers that smoking cigarettes is safe or not unhealthful." (See the Federal Trade Commission, 1964, p. 72)

The result in the marketplace was a dramatic conversion from 'regular' (short length; unfiltered) products to new product forms (filtered; king sized; 100 mm). Spending on advertising nearly tripled from 1952 to 1959, largely through promoting the virtues of the new filtered products, thereby enticing smokers to switch from their regular unfiltered products to filtered and, presumably, safer brands or product-line variants.

> "He had abandoned the regular cigarette, however, on the ground of reduced risk to health. . . . A further consequence of the 'tar derby' was the rapid increase in advertising expenditures during this period. Advertising expenditures in selected media jumped from over $55 million in 1952 to approximately $150 million in 1959." (See Pepples, 1976, p. 1)

Figure 7-1
Kent—Implied AMA Endorsement (Circa 1953)

Females and Older Smokers as Early Filter Smokers

Gender and age were predictors of who adopted the new filtered products. Females converted more readily than males, and older concerned smokers adapted more readily than young starters (O'Keefe and Pollay, 1996). Thus, Philip Morris anticipated that females would be the largest potential market for a "health cigarette" following the release of the 1964 Surgeon General's Report:

> "Women, and particularly young women, would constitute the greatest potential market for a health cigarette." (See Johnston, 1966, p. 1)

Psychology-based consumer research conducted for Brown & Williamson implied that the females who smoked filters were normal, whereas the males seemed unusually anxious. In 1967, this research described women who smoked filter cigarettes as "neither rebels (like women who smoke plain cigarettes), nor insecure (like females who smoke menthols)." The males who smoked filter cigarettes were described as ". . . apprehensive and depressive. They think about death, worry over possible troubles, are uneasy if inactive, don't trust others." (See Oxtoby-Smith, Inc., 1967, pp. 24-25.)

Filter Cigarette Marketing to Males

Once the public accepted filters as an adequate response to at least assuage their worst fears, there was a market opportunity in providing males with filtered products that delivered 'full flavor':

". . . [O]nce the consumer had been sufficiently educated on the virtues of filters, a vacuum was created for a filter with taste; this vacuum was filled by Winston and Marlboro." (See Latimer, 1976, p. 5.)

Figure 7-2
Tareyton—Charcoal Filter (1972)

Some internal industry documents from the 1970s portray the filters of the 1950s and the associated risk reduction as essentially 'cosmetic':

". . . [T]he public began to accept filters as a way to reduce the *cosmetic risks* of smoking and the attendant 'ego-status' risk of appearing to have an immoral, unclean habit." [Emphasis added.] (See Latimer, 1976, p. 3.)

The Early Tar Wars The period from the mid-1950s until the mid-1960s was tumultuous for the industry. Various new filter products were launched, many competitive advertising claims used different standards of measurement, and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) guidelines concerning what was permissible in cigarette advertising changed as well. Episodes of intense competitive rivalry of claims and counter-claims about cigarette yields were dubbed the "tar derby" or "tar wars" within the trade, and the ensuing publicity in the popular press affected the marketplace. Some manufacturers took advantage of these dynamics to present their cigarettes as "healthy" to the public during a period of intense advertising claims, then capitalized on such reputations while selling products that were actually quite high in tar and nicotine yields.

"In 1955, the FTC, reacting to conflicting claims as to tar and filtration, has imposed 'Cigarette Advertising Guides' banning all mention of tar, nicotine and filtration 'when not established by competent scientific proof'. This put a stop to such claims in advertising. In July and August of 1957, the *Reader's Digest* published two articles with figures on tar and nicotine mentioning Kent by name. The August article, written with Kent's assistance was practically an ad for Kent. In 90 days, Kent's sales leaped from 300 million to 3 billion per month. This article broke the dike and set off the famous Tar Derby. Over the next 4 years, tar levels were drastically cut. Marlboro dropped from 34 mg. tar in 1957 to 25 mg. in 1958 and 19 mg. in 1961." (See Cunningham and Walsh, 1980, p. 11)

Kent®, whose advertising of its asbestos-based "Micronite" filter had been very effective, engaged in a series of product revisions in the 1950s. With each iteration, the Kent® product yielded more and more tar and nicotine, and this pattern continued into the 1960s. Similar filter "loosening" was the subject of U.S. Congressional inquiry (Blatnik, 1958).

> "In mid 1960, the FTC called off the Tar Derby, rigidly prohibiting tar and nicotine claims. Some of the new low tar brands disappeared. Soon thereafter, the brands stopped reducing tar levels and, indeed, began to raise them. Kent, for example, went from 14 mg. in 1961 to 16 mg. in 1963 and 19 mg. in 1966. The FTC prohibition ended March 25, 1966 initiating a new phase in Hi-Fi development. Lorrillard [sic] decided not to reduce Kent's tar level again. Instead it put out True." (See Cunningham and Walsh, 1980, p.12.)

Medicinal Menthol During this tar derby period, new menthol-filtered products were introduced, such as Salem®, Newport®, and Oasis®. Manufacturers of these new products capitalized on the reputation that menthol already had, due to its use in cold remedies and related medicinal applications, and the history of "pseudo-health" claims made in earlier menthol cigarette advertising. The Kool® brand had long been promoted as a medicinal product with would-be remedial properties that could make the cigarette suitable when smokers were suffering from coughs, colds, sore throats, etc.:

> "Kool not only remained, but was actively positioned as a remedial/medicinal type product throughout the 1950's." (See Cunningham and Walsh, 1980, p. 9.)

Salem® was introduced in 1956 as the "first truly new smoking advance" (see Figure 7-3).

> "Salem created a whole new meaning for menthol. From the heritage of solves-the-negative-problems-of-smoking, menthol almost instantly became a positive smoking sensation. Menthol in

Figure 7-3
Salem—First Truly New Smoking Advance (1956)

the filter form in the Salem advertising was a 'refreshing' taste experience. It can be viewed as very 'reassuring' in a personal concern climate. Undoubtedly, the medicinal menthol connotation carried forward in a therapeutic fashion, but as a positive taste benefit." (See Cunningham and Walsh, 1980, p. 9.)

"During the 'tar derby', menthol styles were perceived as healthier, low 'tar' smokes due to the quasi-medical health claims in menthol advertising. . . the first true menthol hi-fi was True Green, introduced in 1967. . . By 1974, menthol hi-fi styles had a 27% share of the hi-fi category—close to the proportion of menthols to all styles." (See Chambers, 1979.)

THE 1960s

Implications of the 1964 Surgeon General's Report

The first Surgeon General's Report on smoking and health in 1964 established cigarette smoking as a cause of lung cancer, at least in males. Philip Morris expressed some regret that the 1964 report did not strongly endorse the filtered products that had been sold to the public as a technological fix:

"The health value of filters is undersold in the report and is the industry's best extant answer to its problem. The Tobacco Institute obviously should foster the communication of the filter message by all effective means." (See Wakeham, 1964, p. 8.)

Consumer Guilt and Anxiety Brown & Williamson's advertising agency and market research contractors recognized consumers' mass sense of being addicted, as well as the ensuing conflict, guilt, anxieties, and need for reassurance:

"Most smokers see themselves as addicts . . . the typical smoker feels guilty and anxious about smoking but impotent to control it." (See Oxtoby-Smith, Inc., 1967, p. 6.)

"Psychologically, most smokers feel trapped. They <u>are</u> concerned about health and addiction. Smokers care about what commercials say about them. Advertising may help to reduce anxiety and guilt. . . Brand user image may be critical in influencing shifts in brand loyalty." [Emphasis in original.] (See Oxtoby-Smith, Inc., 1967, p. 14.)

[People who smoke filter cigarettes] ". . . may be receptive to advertising which helps them escape from their inner conflicts about smoking." (See Oxtoby-Smith, Inc., 1967, p. 23.)

"While unquestionably smokers are concerned about the tar and nicotine contents and the filtration effectiveness of their brands, nevertheless, both on the surface and even to some extent unconsciously, they appear to be resisting open involvement with this 'frightening' element of smoking."(See Alex Gochfeld Associates, Inc., 1969, p. 9.)

Some brands were less successful than others when trying to directly address consumer conflicts. Kent®, for example, used a visual portrayal of a smoker's conscience, and risked their ad being experienced as a nagging message (see Figure 7-4).

> ". . . [T]he psychological blinders that smokers have donned, consciously or unconsciously . . . advertising which stresses tar and nicotine content was received less enthusiastically . . . even in the Silva Thins commercial where this theme was the major aspect of the spoken message, a large number of people effectually [sic] blocked it out of their consciousness retaining only the total image of the story shown on the screen." (See Alex Gochfeld Associates, Inc., 1969, pp. 72-73.)

Segments of Concerned Consumers

In order to provide a "foundation upon which marketing and advertising executions can be built," Lorillard did a market segmentation analysis.

> "One of the most important revelations of the present study was the identification of four market segments in the smoker market who are distinct in terms of their desires in cigarettes and their psychological profile.
>
> The fundamental basis upon which the market segments were divided was their desires in the 'ideal cigarette'. After the market segments were divided in terms of their smoking needs, they were then further analyzed in terms of their demography, smoking behavior, and their personality profile." [Emphasis in original.] (See Kieling, 1964, p. 2.)

The consumer segment most appropriate for Kent® was described in substantial psychological detail. Despite the label of "social conformist," of central concern to these smokers were health consequences:

> "Segment B, the social conformists, represents the prime potential market for development of Kent's share.
>
> Compared with the rest of the market, Segment B is less concerned about smoking enjoyment and more concerned about the health aspect of cigarettes. He cares particularly about a cigarette's filter, its king size, and its association with health.
>
> Type B is a self-controlled person who is willing to compromise and give up immediate physical gratification for longer range objectives; he is a thinking person who acts deliberately, and is most likely to sacrifice some of the enjoyment of smoking in the interest of health, about which he is highly concerned. . . These requirements appear to be compatible with Kent's current image.
>
> The other psychological requirement of Type B is the need for social benefits through association with 'educated moderns'. . . 'educated moderns' include the active, modern people, college graduates, and professionals such as lawyers, doctors, etc." [Emphasis in original.] (See Kieling, 1964, pp. 3-5.)

Given that Kent® had a long-established association with 'health' from more than a decade's worth of health-themed advertising, the advertising deliberately offered reassurances to targeted consumers of being seen as "educated moderns," with the health promises subtly made:

> "In the present climate of opinion after the Surgeon General's Report, it may be desirable to offer reassurance on 'association with health' in Kent's advertising." [Emphasis in original.] (See Kieling, 1964, p. 14.)

Figure 7-4
Kent—Voice of Wisdom (1955)

The "Illusion of Filtration" In their 1966 analysis of the market potential for a 'health' cigarette, Philip Morris recognized that while a large proportion of smokers had health concerns, they could be assuaged by products with largely illusory filtration systems. This was helpful since Philip Morris also knew that they had to keep delivering nicotine to those already addicted, as well as to those that they hoped would become addicted. The report's conclusions include the following:

> "1. A large proportion of smokers are concerned about the relationship of cigarette smoking to health. . .
>
> 9. Mere reduction in nicotine and TPM [total particulate matter] deliveries by conventional methods of filtration would not be a sufficient basis for launching a new cigarette.
>
> 10. The illusion of filtration is as important as the fact of filtration.
>
> 11. Therefore any entry should be by a radically different method of filtration but need not be any more effective." (See Johnston, 1966, pp. 1-2.)

Within this report, Philip Morris' analyst captured the dilemma between health concerns and nicotine delivery felt by both smokers and manufacturers:

> ". . . [A]ny health cigarette must compromise between health implications on the one hand and flavor and nicotine on the other . . . flavor and nicotine are both necessary to sell a cigarette. A cigarette that does not deliver nicotine cannot satisfy the habituated smoker and cannot lead to habituation, and would therefore almost certainly fail." (See Johnston, 1966, p. 5.)

Many early brands had been sold with filters that were essentially cosmetic, without meaningful filtration. U.S. Congressional investigations in 1958 found reversals in which some firms' filtered products delivered even more tar and nicotine than their unfiltered traditional products. Reversals occurred even within brand families, with Brand X filtered versions yielding higher tar and nicotine than the unfiltered Brand X products that they ostensibly improved upon (Blatnik, 1958, pp. 45-49).

Fear that Low-Yield Cigarettes Would Allow the Consumer to Wean from Nicotine

In 1969, R. J. Reynolds articulated concerns about reducing nicotine delivery and also maintaining a continuing profitable enterprise. The company saw nicotine as the *sine qua non* of smoking satisfaction and worried that reducing the delivery of nicotine to consumers might have the "self-defeating consequences" of weaning them away from smoking and letting them off the nicotine hook:

> "In its search for 'safer' cigarettes, the tobacco industry has, in essentially every case, simply reduced the amount of nicotine . . . perhaps weaning the smoker away from nicotine habituation and depriving him of parts of the gratification desired or expected. . . Thus, unless some miraculous solution to the smoking-health problem is found, the present 'safer' cigarette strategy, while prudent and fruitful for the short term, may be equivalent to long term liquidation of the cigarette industry." (See Teague, 1969, pp. 9-10.)

This concern with possible 'weaning' was still being expressed later by the British American Tobacco Co. when looking ahead to the 1980s:

> "Taking a long-term view, there is a danger in the current trend of lower and lower cigarette deliveries—*i.e.*, the smoker will be weaned away from the habit. . . Nicotine is an important aspect of 'satisfaction', and if the nicotine delivery is reduced below a threshold 'satisfaction' level, then surely smokers will question more readily why they are indulging in an expensive habit." (See British American Tobacco Company, 1976, p. 2)

THE 1970s

Early High-Filtration (Hi-Fi) Brands

"Carlton and True appeared in the mid 1960's, and Doral and Vantage followed shortly after. . . Lights and milds [sic] versions of full-taste brands proliferated in the early '70's, accounting for 31.6% of hi-fi business by 1975." (See Chambers, 1979.)

By 1973, it was clear to industry participants that a significant number of brands shared certain characteristics that led them to be described as a "new low-delivery segment." Precise relevance to tar and nicotine levels was elusive, in part because some brands like Kent® and Parliament® were perceived by consumers as being low in delivery due to their product and advertising histories, even though they were no longer in fact low in delivery. Listed below are some of the guidelines used by Philip Morris to define low-delivery brands for that company's internal purposes:

"2. All brands in the segment have advertising, if any, focussed on low delivery. No other brand has advertising focused on low delivery.

3. Some brands in the segment have tar and nicotine numbers on their packs. No brand not in the segment has tar and nicotine numbers on its pack.

4. Some brands in the segment have unusual construction filters or dilution holes. No brand not in the segment has either of these characteristics. . .

6. Brands in the segment which are extensions of 'flavor' brands have names which imply low delivery: Marlboro Light, Kool Mild, Pall Mall Extra Mild, Lucky Ten, etc.

Note that Kent and Parliament do not qualify for this new low delivery segment on any of the criteria above. One can still argue, however, that in the minds of consumers Kent and Parliament are low delivery cigarettes . . . consumer opinion should be the ultimate criterion for market segmentation." [Emphasis in original.] (See Tindall, 1973, p. 16.)

Nicotine as a Product Design Feature

During the early 1970s, Philip Morris was internally expressing confidence in its ability to selectively reduce tar yield while continuing to deliver the all-important nicotine:

". . . [T]he tar deliveries of the currently best selling cigarettes might be reduced somewhat, leaving nicotine as it is, without any significant overall decrease in the cigarettes' acceptability." (See Schori, 1971, p. 1.)

R. J. Reynolds was following a similar line of thought in focussing its product development on nicotine delivery:

"If nicotine is the sine qua non of tobacco products and tobacco products are recognized as being attractive dosage forms of nicotine, then it is logical to design our products—and where possible, our advertising—around nicotine delivery rather than 'tar' delivery or flavor." [Emphasis in original.] (See Teague, 1972b, p. 3.)

"In today's market it is reasonable to believe that, given the choice, the typical smoker will chose [sic] and use the cigarette which delivers the desired, required amount of nicotine, with satisfactory flavor, mildness and other attributes, accompanied by the least amount of 'tar'." [Emphasis in original.] (See Teague, 1972a, p. 4.)

By 1976, the R. J. Reynolds Market Research Department (MRD) had joined the research and development (R&D) effort with a clear statement of their intent to maximize the nicotine satisfaction while maintaining high profitability by using conventional filters and packaging:

"MRD and R&D have been working on a sophisticated consumer product testing program to help us ensure that we select the best blend alternative for our brands to optimize physiological satisfaction." (See Fitzgerald *et al.*, 1976, p. 1.)

> "Our top priority is to develop and market low 'tar' brands (12 mg. 'tar' and under) that: Maximize the physiological satisfaction per puff—the single most important need of smokers. . . [and] yield higher profitability which means conventional filters and soft packaging for high speed production efficiencies." (See Fitzgerald *et al*., 1976, p. 38.)

A few years later in 1981, British American Tobacco, the parent company of Brown & Williamson, maintained that, ". . . effort should *not* be spent on designing a cigarette which, through its construction, denied the smoker the opportunity to compensate or oversmoke [sic] to any significant degree." [Emphasis added.] (See Oldman, 1981, p. 2.)

Consumer Reactions and Behavior

During the 1970s, additional evidence of consumer confusion, misinformation, rationalizations, and the corresponding role played by advertising was gathered by multiple firms. Market researchers for industry members and their advertising agencies were not even confident that consumers knew what they were talking about when referring to the 'taste' of a cigarette:

Consumer Ignorance and Confusion

> ". . . [I]t 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." (See Marketing and Research Counselors, Inc., 1975, p. 2.)

Apparently, even the so-called 'taste' of a product is greatly influenced by the brand and its reputation. Merit®, as a free-standing brand, had difficulties in being perceived as flavorful, whereas in contrast, product line extensions like Marlboro Light® had the advantage of being perceived as more flavorful due to the taste reputation of the 'parent' brand:

> ". . . [W]e talked to consumers about Merit's image and advertising. They told us that Merit, like other free standing low tar brands such as Kent, Vantage, Carlton, etc., were perceived to be weaker and have less taste than the line extension low tars: like Marlboro Lights, Winston Lights, Camel Lights. Apparently, these line extension low tars share the taste heritage of their parent full flavor brands." (See Philip Morris, 1990, pp. 13–14.)

In 1974, Kenyon & Eckhardt Advertising studied "recently starting smokers" for Brown & Williamson:

> "The purpose of this research was to gain insight into the perceptions, attitudes and behavior of younger, recently starting smokers regarding initial product usage, current smoking and health concerns. In addition, an effort was made to determine reactions to alternative product positionings [sic]." (See Kenyon & Eckhardt, 1974, p. 1).

> "Health concerns exist among younger smokers. . . One type of smoker rationalized smoking as a pleasure that outweighed the risks. Another felt that they didn't smoke enough to be dangerous.

A third type rationalized his use of cigarettes by feeling he would quit before it was 'too late'. A final smoker group said that science would come to his rescue." (See Kenyon & Eckhardt, 1974, p. 2).

"In talking to these young smokers about the different brands of cigarettes they have smoked, we found that they have little knowledge and, in fact, a great deal of misinformation on brand yields. In all of the sessions, not a single respondent know [sic] the tar and nicotine level of the cigarette he or she smoked." (See Kenyon & Eckhardt, 1974, p. 7).

Lorillard and their ad agency had the same experience when studying consumers for Kent®. Lorillard, along with Foote, Cone & Belding, encouraged scores of targeted smokers to talk about their lives, their cigarettes, their perceptions, and their feelings about tar content for Kent Golden Light®. They, like Brown & Williamson, found that "practically no one knew" the tar content of their own regularly smoked brands. This implied to these firms the need for ads showing comparative packages and data (O'Toole, 1981, pp. 94-95).

Philip Morris also knew about smokers' ignorance of yield levels in the 1970s. Most consumers were not only ignorant of the facts, but even their general impressions were "not too accurate," despite their faith in the technology of filters as displayed by shifts to filters and hi-fi products:

"As yet, there is low awareness among smokers of the tar content of their brand. When asked if they knew the specific milligram tar content of their brand, the vast majority (89%) said they didn't know. . . smokers' <u>impressions</u> of whether their brand has high, moderate or low tar content is more on the mark—although still not too accurate." [Emphasis in original.] (See The Roper Organization, Inc., 1976, p. 14.)

Filters Are Still Perceived As Feminine

As in the 1950s and 1960s, females and older, health-concerned smokers most readily adopted the new, seemingly low-yield products of the 1970s:

"The modern low 'tar' market began in the 1960's with such brands as True, Carlton, and Doral . . . initial gains were from females and older smokers." (See Brown & Williamson, circa 1977, p. 4.)

"The hi-fi smoker demographics tend to be female, older, and have switched from a full flavor style to its counterpart in the hi-fi segment." (See Brown & Williamson, circa 1977, p. 13.)

This was so much the case that the males who smoked these products were suspected of being 'weak' and somehow wimpish or unmasculine in the eyes of consumers who were studied for Brown & Williamson:

"Only women and weak men smoke True or any of those low tar and nicotine cigarettes." (See Marketing and Research Counselors, Inc., 1975, p. 9.)

In 1974, advertising agency advisors to Lorillard tried to counter this problem with a style of advertising for the True® brand that they felt was more masculine in its tonality (see Figure 7-5).

> "In order to obtain a greater share of males. . . logical, rational approaches. . . a 'reasoning' empathetic approach. . . masculine, 'macho' tonality and appeal. Vantage's tonality can be described as 'laying it on the line' in an aggressive, possibly masculine, open fashion." (See DeGarmo, Inc., 1974.)

This problem of low-yield products being perceived as highly feminine seems to have led R. J. Reynolds to design a marketing strategy that attracted males to a low-yield cigarette that they were developing in 1976:

> "What we want is to portray the feeling and image projected by Marlboro and Kool advertising on a Vantage/Merit type of cigarette. In other words, put 'balls' (two of them) on a low 'tar' and nicotine cigarette and position." [Parenthetical clarification of the male genitalia meaning of "balls" as in original.] (See Hind *et al.*, 1976, p. 63.)

While young male consumers understood that filters seemingly offered improved health prospects, this was in conflict with their desires to appear bold and daring:

> "In discussing how a smoker can limit the risks of serious disease without actually giving up smoking, the respondents clearly recognized the role of high filtration cigarettes. . . the underlying mechanism working against acceptance of high filtration brands in this age group is that the image of these cigarettes is contrary to one of the initial motivations for smoking—to look manly and strong." (See Kenyon & Eckhardt Advertising, 1974, p. 10.)

Continuing Consumer Conflicts

Consumers' conflicted feelings about smoking cigarettes were such that they became poor respondents to Brown & Williamson's research efforts:

> ". . . [S]mokers themselves falter badly when asked to comment on the rewards accruing to them from smoking. . . Smokers are so overwhelmed by the addictive properties of cigarettes and the potential health hazard that they wax virtually inarticulate when asked to present a case for the other side. They become guilty and shame-faced." (See Kalhok and Short, 1976, p. 8.)

Smokers were not even aware and/or willing to admit how much they smoked:

> "Smokers' own estimates of their daily consumption levels are extremely unreliable. Many smokers underestimate their actual consumption and certain segments of many populations, notably young people and women, are often reluctant to admit they smoke." (See British American Tobacco Co., 1979, p. 1.)

Brown & Williamson blamed consumer confusion on advertising, in part. When contemplating a possible "index of safety" for cigarettes, Brown & Williamson commented that:

Figure 7-5
Vantage "Don't Cop Out"—Macho Tonality (1971)

"Such an index would have merit for the health-conscious smoker, who otherwise may well become confused and increasingly dismayed if one alleged hazard follows another, coupled with the manufacturers' 'prescription for health' through advertising." (See Kalhok and Short, 1976, p. 11.)

Additional market research conducted for Brown & Williamson and its advertising agency, Ted Bates, indicated that ads needed to be carefully designed, lest they challenge consumer denials and rationalizations and trigger consumer defensiveness:

". . . [S]mokers have to face the fact that they are illogical, irrational and stupid . . . while an ad that depicts an exciting, invigorating situation could be interesting to the smoke-viewer, the very thin line separating positive excitement from negative-creating situation should never be crossed." [Emphasis in original.] (See Marketing and Research Counselors, Inc., 1975, pp. 1-2.)

". . . [C]ommunication with the smoker that either directly or indirectly violates and belittles this rationalized need will meet smoker's objection—it destroys the rationalization and the smoker would feel naked and rather stupid." (See Marketing and Research Counselors, Inc., 1975, p. 5.)

One of the problems that advertising could address was the declining social esteem of smokers, helping them to avoid shame and guilt:

"Over the period of 20 years, the public and the private image of the smoker (though exceptions may be found among teenagers starting to smoke) has changed from being one of an individual exulting in his positive strength, masculinity and acceptance in the community, to that of a weak and dependent slave, with prospects of illness, however distant these may be, unnerved by his children's forebodings [sic], and without strength to quit." (See Kalhok and Short, 1976, p. 14.)

In discussing the "elements of good cigarette advertising or how to reduce objections to a cigarette," this point was reiterated while stating that "there are not any real, absolute, positive qualities and attributes in a cigarette," as noted in the following:

> "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. . . The more a cigarette ad is disbelieved, the more it 'fights' the defense mechanism of the smoker—the more the smoker feels challenged. . . The picture, situation presented and the copy should be ambiguous enough to allow the reader to fill-in his/her illogical-logic which are the results of each individual defense-mechanism." (See Marketing and Research Counselors, Inc., 1975, pp. 12-13.)

Image of Health It was important to the industry that certain cigarette brands continued to appear to be 'healthy', even if this was an image or illusion, and even if the manufacturing technology did not yet allow for the control of smoke toxicity:

> "Looking further down the road, the possibility exists that . . . filters might offer a selective means of controlling smoke toxicity. Well before that date, however, **opportunities exist for filter and cigarette designs which offer the image of 'health re-assurance'**." [Emphases added.] (See British American Tobacco Co., 1976, p. 6.)

New Product Activity Philip Morris had seen the competitive value of a so-called "health cigarette" following the first Surgeon General's Report on cigarettes in 1964. Over the course of the next 12 years, Philip Morris worked on such a product, culminating in the 1976 product launch of the Merit® brand. Just as with Philip Morris' earlier efforts in the 1950s to develop and consumer-test the Marlboro® product, packaging, and promotion, the product development process for Merit® was as much focused on consumer and market testing as on product technologies, per se. The final market launch strategies used in 1976 gave particular emphasis to the choice of the name Merit®, obviously communicating apparent virtue, and used an advertising style that made this product development seem eminently scientific and newsworthy and less like an ad (see Figure 7-6). The product launch strategy included a very high level of advertising investment ($45 million in 1976) to support a "multi-media blitz."

> "The objective of the advertising campaign was to establish enough credibility to overcome smoker skepticism towards low-tar good taste claims. The name 'MERIT' was chosen because it was short, to the point, and it reflected the consumer appeal of good taste at low tar." (See John and Wakeham, 1977, p. 13.)

"Merit was the primary focus of the sales force for a full year. . . We spent $45 million on advertising—remember $45 million in 1976! This was a record amount for a new brand introduction. . . Creatively, we used provocative headlines and important looking copy which looked like it had real news value. Tar/taste theory exploded!—Smoke cracked!—Taste barrier broken!" [Emphasis in original.] (See Philip Morris, 1990, p. 4.)

Figure 7-6
Merit Science Works—"Enriched Flavor" (1979)

This Merit® launch effort, and its stunning success, led to a rash of similar competitive efforts:

"Merit's introduction gave birth to a series of me-too's. . . 'Fact' was introduced in 1976. . . RJR tried to counter Merit's technological enriched flavor story with their all natural 'Real' launched in mid 1976. . . 'Decade', which was launched on the platform of 'the cigarette that took 10 years to create'. . . Later, Barclay was introduced." (See Philip Morris, 1990, p. 5.)

Marketing of Reduced Gas Phase Cigarettes

Brown & Williamson's introduction of the Fact® brand was described by a company spokesman as "a typical new product introduction as compared to Philip Morris' sudden national blitz for Merit. . . Fact is directed to the educated, concerned smoker. Our copy is straightforward and direct, and there is no gender differentiation or symbolism." (See Brand Report 12, 1976, p. 146.) Fact® was using the "Purite" filter to filter gases, but needed to first inform consumers that gases were an issue. Their initial effort (see Figure 7-7) was test-marketed in New England and the North Central States, but did not perform well in the marketplace, despite advertising support of about $30 million over 1976-1977. The senior brand manager of Brown & Williamson explained:

"The low gas benefit of the product wasn't of interest to the public, and wasn't understood. The advertising and packaging failed to reinforce the flavor aspect of the brand. . . The package was perceived by customers as medicinal, like a prescription bottle of Geritol. The tar level wasn't low enough by mid-1976 to allow it to be a talking point in advertising." (See Brand Report 23, 1977, p. 152.)

Brown & Williamson's reconsideration of its Purite gas filter showed a recognition that in having to educate consumers about gas in smoke, they might raise more anxiety than they could resolve with this type of product:

> "While low gas does offer the opportunity to make positive health statements to active and passive smokers alike, it does run the category risk of raising another health issue and perceptively offering lower taste/satisfaction. . . past experiences with Lark and FACT (*i.e.*, good taste and greater health reassurance via a new method) demonstrate the inability to immediately proceed with either of these options." (Brown & Williamson, circa 1977, p. 1.)

Figure 7-7
Introducing Fact—Low Gas (Before—1976)

Marketing Cigarettes Without Additives

R. J. Reynolds' 1976 assessment for their 3-year action plan acknowledged that they were not yet technologically capable of producing products that had reduced tar without the undesirable effect of also having reduced nicotine:

> "In general, methods used to reduce 'tar' delivery in cigarettes lead to a proportionate reduction in nicotine. . . It would be more desirable from our standpoint, *i.e.*, providing satisfaction to the smoker and maintaining his allegiance to smoking if we could reduce 'tar' to whatever target we choose without a proportionate drop in nicotine. . . It will take some time to get there by the approaches we visualize." (See Fitzgerald *et al.*, 1976, p. 91.)

Nonetheless, R. J. Reynolds wanted to participate in the rapidly expanding category of concerned consumers, referred to as "worriers" by the company:

> "[The]. . . 'worrier' segment of the market (17% of smokers are so classified). . . 'Numbers' products have a growing appeal to these smokers. Products in the 1-6 mg. 'tar' range will continue to build successful long-term franchises (*e.g.*, Carlton's growth rate, NOW's immediate acceptance—fostered by the intense industry commitment in 1976 to hi-fi brands)." (See Fitzgerald *et al.*, 1976.)

Figure 7-8
Real Natural (1977)

R. J. Reynolds' product offering was the Real® brand, with a "natural—no additives" claim (see Figure 7-8). This 'natural' position was thought to convey positive features to both full-flavor smokers and those seeking effective filtration and health protection. The Real® concept was described as having, "Broad appeal based primarily on 'natural'/no additives claim. Connotes taste to full flavor smokers, low numbers to hi-fi smokers. No significant negatives." (See Fitzgerald *et al*., 1976.)

When the Real® brand was launched by R. J. Reynolds in 1977, it had a budget of $40 million for "boxcar loads of display materials, more than 25 million sample packages, the biggest billboard overlooking Times Square, the summer long services of 2,000 salesmen. . . and advertising, according to the agency running the campaign, on everything but painted rocks." (See Crittenden, 1977, p. 1ff.)

That same year, Brown & Williamson was scheduled to spend $50 million through the Ted Bates advertising agency on just the product-line extension of Kool Super Light®. The Kool Super Light® campaign was to appear "in every conceivable non-broadcast medium, and even an inconceivable one"—1,500 Beetleboards, *i.e.*, painted up Volkswagen Beetle® cars (Dougherty, 1977).

Promotional Patterns

Disproportionate Advertising Budgets

The enormous advertising budgets used to launch the new low-yield products commanded a very disproportionate share of the firms' total advertising budgets (share of voice, or SOV), and were seen as creating marketplace demand for low-yield products. The advertising spending for new products in 1976-1978 was awesome. New brands and product-line extensions (variations on familiar brands) were introduced with major budgets as follows (Source: Lorillard, Inc., 1980):

Product	Budget	Year
Merit®	$44 million	(1976)
Now®	$23 million	(1976)
Fact®	$20 million	(1976)
Real®	$29 million	(1977)
Decade®	$24 million	(1977)
Camel Light®	$25.3 million	(1978)
Carlton®	$15.3 million	(1976)
Vantage®	$20.6 million	(1976/1977)
Kent Golden Light®	$21.0 million	(1976-1978)
Marlboro Light®	$20.1 million	(1976-1978)

"The phenomenal growth of hi-fi brands is, in part, a self-fulfilling prophecy. Hi-fi expenditures have grown from 7% SOV in 1972 to 45% in 1977, much faster than actual segment growth. Spending per share point now equals $8.3MM." (See Brown & Williamson, circa 1977, p. 14.)

"[The]. . . low tar revolution [of 1976ff] is not ignited by a particular event, such as a *Reader's Digest* article, a Surgeon General's Report, etc.; it happens quietly based on technologically improved products and consumers' desire for a reasonable compromise and the industry's massive advertising support leading category development." (See Cunningham and Walsh, 1980, p. 55.)

"Lo Fi advertising now (Feb 1980) accounts for only 21% of total—less than a third of 1974's share of voice. Reduced tar brands have increased to 79% share of voice—with ULT's (Ultra Low Tar's) now accounting for 19% of the total. ULT advertising is growing at a faster rate than any other category." (See Lorillard, Inc., 1980.)

Executional Aspects The advertising executions that communicated the "lightness" theme were 'light' in many dimensions:

" 'Light-lighter-lightest' were achieved by insistance [sic] on lighter presentations—product story imagery—white packs—pale colours—mildness dominated copy." (See British American Tobacco Company, circa 1985, p. 13.)

This tactic of using color and imagery to connote product 'lightness' had been used earlier with the introduction of Marlboro Light® in 1971 (see Figure 7-9).

Figure 7-9
Marlboro Lights (1972)

". . . [W]hen Marlboro Lights was first introduced in 1971. . . the advertising was dramatically different. . . first using water color executions, then, big pack shots, a lot of white space and a small cowboy visual." (See Philip Morris, 1990, p. 6.)

This means of communicating 'lightness' with white or pale-colored props, settings, and pristine environments wasn't new with Marlboro Light®, and has proven to be a durable execution tactic. For example, Kent® in the early 1960s showed models all dressed in white, with both white props and in a pure white, interior studio environment (see Figure 7-10).

Figure 7-10
Kent—Black Smokers in Pure White Environment (1964)

Through most of the 1990s, the Parliament® campaign consistently used models dressed all in white placed in white environments as well as in outside pristine environments (see Figure 7-11).

Artwork for Marlboro Ultra Light® has featured a pristine environment dominated by fresh air and water, with only minimally sized cowboys or horses (see Figure 7-12).

Even the packaging design is important in affecting perceptions of relative safety, as well as taste:

"Red packs connote strong flavor, green packs connote coolness or menthol and white packs suggest that a cigaret [sic] is low-tar. White means sanitary and safe. And if you put a low-tar cigaret [sic] in a red package, people say it tastes stronger than the same cigaret [sic] packaged in white." (See Koten, 1980, p. 22)

Because of its importance, Brown & Williamson tested 33 packages before choosing the blue, gold, and red design used for its Viceroy Rich Light® brand. Philip Morris heightened the social status appeal of its Benson & Hedges® brand by printing the company's Park Avenue address on the front and back of each pack. R. J. Reynolds gave Now® a "modern, chrome-and-glass look designed to appeal to upscale city and suburban dwellers." Philip Morris' successful Merit® connotes a "flamboyant, young-in-spirit image" (to offset low tar's dull image) with big yellow, brown, and orange racing stripes (Koten, 1980). Most "Light" and "Ultra Light" cigarettes are presented in pure white packaging with minimal adornments.

To supplement and reinforce their advertising efforts, Brown & Williamson conceived of public relations and political activities that encouraged consumers to perceive apparently independent endorsements of low-yield products. This would reinforce advertising impressions about the virtues of low-tar products with seemingly independent "news" from credible sources.

> "B&W will undertake activities designed to generate statements by public health opinion leaders which will indicate tolerance for smoking and improve the consumer's perception of ultra low 'tar' cigarettes (5 mg. or less). . . Through political and scientific friends, B&W will attempt to elicit. . . statements sympathetic to the concept that generally less health risk is associated with ultra low deliv-

ery cigarette consumption. . . B&W would seek to generate spontaneous mainstream media articles dealing with component deliveries, much as the old Readers Digest [sic] articles." (What are the obstacles/enemies of a swing to low "tar" and what action should we take? Minnesota Trial Exhibit 26,185, 1982.)

Figure 7-11
Parliament Lights White on White in Pristine Environment (1998)

Capturing Consumer Concerns The continuation of intensive promotion into 1977 involved "a numbers game that boggles the mind while promising to relieve the lungs" (Brand Report 23, 1977, p. 150). Competition was intense, due in part to the high stakes and the relatively few number of switchers. Said Lorillard's Tom Mau several years later:

> "The vast majority of the cigarette consumers are brand loyal. . . Only somewhere around 10% of people switch brands annually. That's not a lot of people. . . To come out with something new and successful is difficult." (See Gardener, 1984, p. 176.)

It was clear to industry observers that the pace of new product launches in the mid-1970s was seeking to capitalize on the health concerns of smokers:

> "The current duel between True and Vantage and between Carlton and Now are other examples of competitive efforts to capitalize on the smoking/health controversy." (See Pepples, 1976, p. 9.)

When the motivations for smoking ultra-low-tar cigarettes were studied by Philip Morris' contractors in 1978, representatives of the Brand Management Group, Marketing Research Department, and the advertising agency all observed the discussion groups from behind a two-way viewing mirror and tape recordings were made available. The discussions were guided by a detailed outline with extensive probing. The findings were that all of the reasons for selecting this product form were health-related:

> ". . . [W]ith respect to ultra low tar brands there appear to be particular additional motivations for smoking this type of cigarette. These include:

A - Voluntary desire for a safer cigarette.

B - Increasing awareness and concern about possible hazards of smoking.

C - Health problem forcing a change to a safer cigarette (as an alternative to not being able to quit).

D - Peer and family pressure to smoke a safer cigarette (as an alternative to not being able to stop smoking).

E - Mental commitment to do something about smoking habits." (See Goldstein/Krall Marketing Resources, Inc., 1979.)

Many consumers considered, tried, and even switched to the nominally lower yield products, and did so primarily in pursuit of better health:

"More people have switched brands in the past year, and the largest group of switchers have gone to low tars. Even among those who have not switched to a low tar brand, there is fairly high disposition among smokers to consider switching to one. This is probably attributable to the continuing concern over smoking and health." (See The Roper Organization, Inc., 1976, p. 3.)

"Results show that almost two-thirds of smokers are 'impressed' by the talk of how cigarettes can seriously affect their health. . . Women are more concerned about smoking and health than men, young people more than older people, whites more than blacks, and the college educated more than those less well educated." [The growth among low tar brands was] ". . . particularly strong among two groups who have traditionally been trend setters in the cigarette market—women and the college educated." (See The Roper Organization, Inc., 1976, pp. 8, 12.)

When asked if and why some brands were thought to be better for health, smokers had believed the idea that the nominally low yields were meaningful:

Figure 7-12
Marlboro Ultra Light Pristine Environment (1998)

"The low tar brands have cornered opinion that to the extent any brands are better for your health, they are. All smokers were asked whether they thought any

particular brands were better for your health than others, and if so, which brands. Three in ten of all smokers said some brands were better for health than others, and almost half of the low tar brand smokers said this. The brands named were almost exclusively low tar brands, with the older low tar brands (Vantage, True and Carlton) getting most mentions. Considering the short length of time they have been on the market, both Merit and Now had comparatively good mention." (See The Roper Organization, Inc., 1976, p. 19.)

". . . [I]t is the lower tar content of these brands that make people say they are better for health. When asked why the brands they named were better for your health, answers overwhelmingly were concerned with lower tar content." (See The Roper Organization, Inc., 1976, p. 20.)

The reassurance of apparent low yields led many smokers to switch rather than quit:

"Smokers <u>needed</u> light brands for tangible, practical, understandable reasons. . . It is useful to consider lights more as a third alternative to quitting and cutting down—a branded hybrid of smokers' unsuccessful attempts to modify their habit on their own." [Emphasis in original.] (See British American Tobacco Co., circa 1985, pp. 9, 13.)

[Many said] ". . . they had tried to quit smoking at some point in time, they do not appear to have cut down the number of cigarettes they are smoking. The only concession that has been made is the switch to an ultra low tar brand. These smokers seemed to be either resigned to the fact or satisfied that they will probably never quit smoking. In point of fact, smoking an ultra low tar cigarette seems to relieve some of the guilt of smoking and provide an excuse not to quit." (See Goldstein/Krall Marketing Resources, Inc., 1979, p. 12.)

The True® campaign in the 1970s spoke directly to the desire to quit, portraying quitting and smoking True® as equivalent alternatives (see Figure 7-13).

An important strategic reason for adding low-yield products to a product line, also known as a brand family, was to retain the patronage of consumers as they aged and became more concerned about their health:

[Developing] ". . . new products in the higher end of the reduced tar category. . . is especially important for Lorillard's long term growth. Younger smokers (less than 35) are smoking products in the higher end of the reduced tar segment and lo-fi. These consumers will move down the tar spectrum, as they get older, with the probability of staying with the line extensions of products consumed in their youth." (See Mau, 1981, p. 7.)

Lessons Learned About Advertising

Tobacco manufacturers saw advertising, and marketing efforts more generally, as vital to how consumers perceived the products and themselves; these efforts ultimately determined how well various firms succeeded. Lorillard listed marketing's psychological import right alongside of the product's capacity to deliver the physiological stimulation of nicotine.

Figure 7-13
Quit or Smoke True as Equivalent Options (1976)

> ". . . [L]et me try to define the elements of product acceptance (given sales distribution and trial) as they relate to tobacco products. . . The value or price of the product is a factor. . . The second element in acceptance is psychological. One principle component of this element arises from our marketing effort. . . The third element in acceptance is physiological, being comprised largely of the nicotine-induced stimulation." (See Spears, 1973, pp. 2-3.)

With experience, members of the industry realized that the best advertising gave filter smokers ego reinforcement, and didn't focus solely on nominal filter effectiveness. This might be appropriate when introducing new product concepts (*e.g.*, filters), but once the concept was understood, it was better to avoid any direct addressing of health aspects.

> "1964-1972—The beginning of the high filtration derby. . . In this type of environment, good new product copy directly addressed the health arguments by focusing on lowered tar and nicotine while also claiming to retain real tobacco taste." [Emphasis in original.] (See Latimer, 1976, p. 4.)

> "Less effective copy during this period continued to focus on the filtration process (*e.g.*, selectrate filter, charcoal filters, accu-ray, etc.) or vacillated between emphasis on taste and emphasis on filter." (See Latimer, 1976, p. 3.)

Brown & Williamson articulated the dual objectives of good advertising—providing reassurance about healthfulness (without, of course, doing so in a heavy-handed way to induce defensiveness) and also providing a socially attractive brand image that the smoker could acquire when buying and displaying the package:

> ". . . [T]he average smoker often seeks self-justification for smoking. Good cigarette advertising in the past has given the average smoker a means of justification on the two dimensions typically used in anti-smoking arguments: 1. High performance risk dimension. . . . 2. Ego/status risk dimension.
>
> Cigarette advertising. . . provides only justification/rationalization for those who already smoke. . . The smoker's cigarette brand choice process is largely an exercise in risk reduction. For some smokers reduction in physical performance risk is paramount, for others reduction in 'ego/status' risk comes first. . . All good cigarette advertising has either directly addressed the anti-smoking arguments prevalent at the time or has created a strong, attractive image into which the besieged smoker could withdraw." [Emphasis in original.] (See Latimer, 1976, pp. 1-2.)

The international headquarters of Brown & Williamson's parent firm, the British American Tobacco Co., counseled that new marketing approaches should:

> ". . . [C]reate brands and products which reassure consumers, by answering to their needs. Overall marketing policy will be such that we maintain faith and confidence in the smoking habit." (See Short, 1977, p. 1.)

The advertising campaigns and related communications were central to how this was to be done:

> "All work in this area [communications] should be directed towards providing consumer reassurance about cigarettes and the smoking habit. . . by claimed low deliveries, by the perception of low deliveries and by the perception of 'mildness'. Furthermore, advertising for low delivery or traditional brands should be constructed in ways so as not to provoke anxiety about health, but to alleviate it, and enable the smoker to feel assured about the habit and confident in maintaining it over time." [Emphasis in original.] (See Short, 1977, p. 3.)

This attempt to reassure, but not so bluntly as to raise defensiveness, and to simultaneously offer positive, ego-satisfying, brand imagery, seems to have been a key to the success of some of the pioneering filter products. Even the firms being dominated by the more successful marketing efforts of other firms recognized this. In 1969, American Tobacco noted that:

> ". . . [T]hose ads which make a special point of stressing low tar and nicotine appear to enjoy less attention and seem to have less positive impact than those whose advertising has an enjoyment, fun, or 'story' orientation." (See Alex Gochfeld Associates, Inc., 1969, p. 18.)

THE 1980s

Policing Deceptive Advertising

Carlton®

Some very deceptive practices went totally unchecked. Carlton® had the technology for delivering very low machine-measured tar yields, and used these low-yield test results in its advertising. A very desirable brand image was created while promoting Carlton® in a hard box, emphasizing its very low numbers (see Figure 7-14). Unfortunately, the boxed product seems to have been a "phantom brand" and consumers who bought Carlton® in the store got soft packs. Although consumers might well have expected that they were getting the same product in a different box, it was in fact a very different product—one that at times was delivering many, many more times the tar and nicotine than indicated in the ads.

> "FTC's present system further contributes to consumer deception because it allows some cigarette companies to promote heavily a 'box' brand, without adequately distinguishing it from the soft pack of the same brand name, which delivers considerably more 'tar'. In fact, however, the companies produce such a small volume of the box brand as to make it a phantom brand that is rarely found in the marketplace. On the other hand, the soft-pack version bearing the identical brand name and package design but testing at a considerably higher 'tar' level, is the version readily available to the consumer." [Emphasis in original.] (See Pepples, 1982, p. 4.)

Now®, like Carlton®, also featured its very low-yield hard box product in the advertising, while its other product forms delivered many, many more times higher yield rates (see Figure 7-15).

Figure 7-14
Carlton Box "Phantom Brand" (1985)

The only effective policing of deceptive advertising of low-tar products came from competitors, rather than the FTC or any other agency. In one case, Lorillard used their data from a taste comparison test to imply a consumer preference for its Triumph® brand over Merit® (see Figure 7-16) and other brands. Both Philip Morris and R. J. Reynolds objected, and had data of their own to support their claims. In the court proceedings, it was learned that the Lorillard survey showed 36 percent favored Triumph® over Merit®, 24 percent rated them even, and 40 percent favored Merit®; these preferences were obtained after subjects

had been informed of the products' tar levels. Although nearly a quarter of the subjects had no preference, the enjoined statement took advantage of this and stated, "An amazing 60% said 3 mg Triumph tastes as good or better than 8 mg Merit." (See Philip Morris, Inc., v. Loew's Theatres, Inc., 1980, p. 1.)

Figure 7-15
Now Box with Substantially Lower Yield Than Soft Pack (1980)

Barclay®

With the FTC yield data providing an apparent accreditation, consumers were likely to perceive these yield numbers as valid and meaningful. When Brown & Williamson brought the Barclay® product to market in 1981, it did so with an ad campaign that called the product 99 percent tar free (see Figure 7-17). The product's structure, which was described as "extremely easy to design and produce," allowed for so much dilution of the smoke column when tested on machines that it generated phenomenally low-yield data in the FTC test. This caused alarm among Brown & Williamson's competitors, who petitioned the FTC for help. Because of the competitive threat posed by Barclay®, its competitors disclosed to authorities their awareness that the FTC testing procedure was flawed and that the yield data were invalid for human smokers.

> "The next generation of 'Barclay competitors' will be spawned (indeed has already been spawned) in the minds of R&D and marketing people throughout the industry and its suppliers. This generation of products, or the next, could easily be products which will deliver NO 'tar' or nicotine when smoked by the FTC method, and yet when smoked by humans essentially be unfiltered cigarettes. Such products could (and would) be advertized [sic] as 'tar-free', 'zero milligrams FTC tar', or the 'ultimate low-tar cigarette', while actually delivering 20-, 30-, 40-mg or more 'tar' when used by a human smoker! They will be extremely easy to design and produce. . . . Such cigarettes, while deceptive in the extreme, would be very difficult for the consumer to resist, since they would provide everything that we presently believe makes for desirable products: taste, 'punch', ease of draw and 'low FTC tar'." [Emphasis in original.] (See Reynolds *et al.*, 1982, p. 1.)

[As to the threat Barclay represented:] "Here was a 1 mg. tar product that delivered the taste of a much stronger cigarette. Of course we know how they did it, but to consumers the 99% tar free claim was intriguing. . . Merit responded by supporting Merit Ultra Lights with an $80 million media budget." (See Philip Morris, 1990, p. 8.)

Figure 7-16
Triumph Beats Merit with Deceptive Data (1980)

Important Imagery Once the product concept of low-yield filtration had been communicated, and the previously discussed brands had established some corresponding reputation, their advertising strategies tended toward more visual, image-oriented forms, as these could convey enviable lifestyles, healthy behavior, rewarded risk-taking, and the social class and 'intelligence' of brand users.

When Merit Ultra Light® was introduced in 1983, the advertising program had an $80 million media budget, which did not account for retail promotional efforts. This advertising series featured imagery of large sailing ships in what was termed the "sea" campaign (see Figure 7-18). The executions not only showed young people in an enviable, carefree, affluent lifestyle amidst a pristine environment, they also were careful to avoid any suggestions of danger.

Vantage®—An Intelligent Choice

Images and ad copy had to be carefully selected, lest the ads reinforce fears rather than offer reassurance. In 1980, one Vantage® ad made direct reference to "what you may not want" from a cigarette, only to discover that it alarmed some readers about cancer:

> "The fact that a Vantage ad dares to raise the issue of 'what you may not want' generates defensiveness toward smoking in general, and a feeling of discomfort. The reference to the taste of Vantage is lost; overpowered by the implications of tar, nicotine and cancer." (See R. J. Reynolds-MacDonald, 1980.)

The target Vantage® smoker was "female, white collar, extremely concerned about their health, and would like to quit smoking." A Vantage® ad headlined "To Smoke or Not to Smoke" (see Figure 7-19) ran in both the United States and Canada. It stated that, "Vantage is the cigarette for people who may have second thoughts about smoking and are looking for a way to do something about it." According to an R. J. Reynolds operational plan

(1983) and strategic plan (1983-1987), the basic strategy was to present Vantage® as an intelligent choice, "positioning Vantage as the only contemporary choice for intelligent smokers." (See Pollay, 2000.) The tactic was to influence consumer perceptions. A 1983 R. J. Reynolds media plan sought "to establish a consumer perception that Vantage is a contemporary cigarette for intelligent smokers." (See Pollay, 2000.) Apparently, this aim was accomplished because, in 1987, an R. J. Reynolds media plan briefing document stated that the goal for a target audience with a "high amount of quitters" was "to maintain consumer perception that Vantage is a contemporary cigarette for intelligent smokers." (See Pollay, 2000.)

Figure 7-17
Barclay—99% Tar Free (1981)

Psychoanalyzing Merit® and Vantage® Smokers

No doubt envious of the success of Merit® among "concerned smokers," as well as that of Marlboro® among starters, R. J. Reynolds commissioned in-depth psychological research from Social Research, Inc., in 1982. The purpose of the survey was to compare the smokers of Vantage® and Merit® based on their smoking histories, their beliefs about the filter and other responses to advertising, and their personalities. In-depth interviews elicited insights into some of the psychological subtleties of respondents from Atlanta, Indianapolis, Denver, Phoenix, and San Francisco. R. J. Reynolds gleaned some useful information from the research:

> "Both Vantage and Merit smokers have similar early smoking histories. . . moving from non-filters to filters, switching to lighter cigarettes to relieve physical symptoms and as an acknowledgement of increased concerns about alleged health hazards." [Emphasis in original.] (See Levy and Robles, 1982, p. 5.)
>
> "Vantage smokers believe that the filter itself is strong enough to catch these impurities and that the hole structure is such that they will not see so much of the resulting discoloration. These ideas make them think the end product is a milder and more 'healthful' smoke." (See Levy and Robles, 1982, p. 16.)
>
> "Merit smokers. . . have been influenced by Merit advertising which so single-mindedly proclaims the brand's lowered tar and nicotine. . . Vantage smokers. . . the advertising influenced them by

promising real smoking satisfaction from a cigarette, by not focusing so much on the low tar aspect." (See Levy and Robles, 1982, p. 89.)

Figure 7-18
Merit Ultra Light "Sea" Campaign (1986)

DISCUSSION

The Value of Official Government Ratings

Some members of the industry have long found the appearance of Federal Government vetting to be a desirable factor usable in advertising. For example, the 1958 advertising for Parliament® boasted that it was "the first filter cigarette in the world that meets the standards of the United States Testing Co." (see Figure 7-20). The ad showed the organization's official seal, which included a microscope, and although the ad was generated by a private firm, the seal was readily perceived as acceptance by a Government agency.

Note, too, the Carlton® use of a headline stating that the "Latest U.S. Gov't [sic] Laboratory test confirms. . . Carlton is lowest" in 1985, as seen earlier in Figure 7-14.

The Federal Government's adoption of a "uniform and reliable testing procedure" consistent with the methodology of Philip Morris also seemed beneficial to that corporation. Philip Morris foresaw in 1964 that such test results could be used in advertising copy, as they could communicate that an official Government agency had vetted the products, as well as the possibility that data with a competitive advantage angle could be provided:

> "Apart from possible legal requirements, such a policy would enhance advertising opportunities." (See Wakeham, 1964, p. 6.)

Later, Brown & Williamson saw the benefit to them, even if not to the public, in using Government evaluations and rating procedures. While the industry preferred to go unregulated, regulation offered some benefits, namely prospects for greater stability and the appearance of Government approval of their products by official testing procedures.

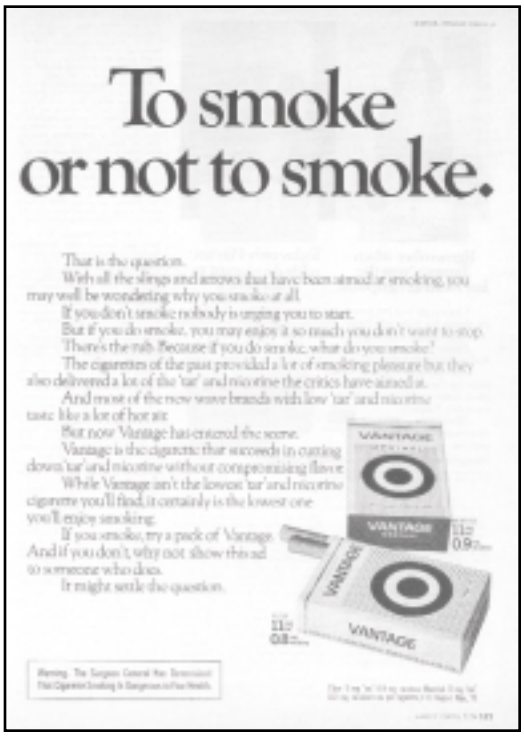
> "The tobacco industry, of course, would prefer no regulation at all. If there must be regulation, the industry is probably better off to have it at the federal level. . . Even expanded regulatory efforts may be shared by the industry to [illegible word] stability in the market

or by individual manufacturers to bolster market positions—for example, by capitalizing on official tar and nicotine ratings in cigarette advertising." (See Pepples, 1976, p. 8.)

The promotional value of the FTC data meant that the industry recognized protecting the credibility of the FTC procedure was in its own interests:

> "Inherent limitations of the FTC cigarette testing program, and borderline low-'tar' advertising practices resulting from the way the test results are reported have contributed to substantial consumer confusion and misunderstanding. This situation threatens to erode public confidence in both the FTC's test reports and the industry's advertising claims." (See Pepples, 1982, p. 1.)

Figure 7-19
Vantage "To Smoke or Not To Smoke" (1974)



Poor Information, But Rich Imagery

Cigarette advertising is notoriously uninformative, with characteristic forms using veiled health implications and pictures of 'health' along with vague promises of taste and satisfaction (Pollay, 1994, pp. 179-184). Occasionally, ads for new technological developments in filter design called attention to the filter, with allusions to filter effectiveness, but almost always without being specific about what constituents of tobacco or its smoke were being filtered, what degree of filtration effectiveness was being realized, or what health or safety consequences were warranted. Only the tar and nicotine information—as mandated by regulation and generated by conventional test methods—is given, without interpretation. For example, Carlton® now encourages smokers to start "thinking about number 1" and smoke its "Ultra Ultra Light" cigarette (see Figure 7-21).

Many cigarette ads contain no information whatsoever, save for the implicit reminder that a brand exists, *e.g.*, many Marlboro® ads. Some contemporary ads, like a recent campaign for Merit Ultra Light®, take a humorous visual approach to convey that it might be lighter than expected (see Figure 7-22).

Consumer Information

The cigarette industry has not voluntarily employed its advertising to inform consumers in a consistent and meaningful way about any of the following: 1) the technologies employed in fabricating the products, 2) the constituents added in the manufacturing processes, 3) the residues

and contaminants that may be present in the combustible column, 4) the constituents of smoke that may be hazardous, 5) the addictiveness of nicotine, or 6) the health risks to which its regular consumers and their families are inevitably exposed. Instead, their advertising for low-yield products has relied on pictures of health and images of intelligence, and has misled consumers into believing filtered products in general, and low-tar products in specific, to be safe or safer than other forms without explaining exactly why.

Figure 7-20
Parliament—Endorsement of United States Testing Co. (1958)

Marketing/Advertising Gives Cigarettes Vitality

While the technological means to produce low-yield products might seem important, to industry insiders it was the marketing sophistication that was even more crucial in determining the relative success of various firms:

> [In contrast to the import of marketing] ". . . technology in the tobacco industry has had virtually no effect on the relative success of the six companies. . . the industry has *become so sophisticated in marketing* that nontechnical developments, while they might have a large influence on the industry in terms of the types of cigarettes available, would probably do little to shift shares from one company to another." [Emphasis added.] (See Ennis *et al.*, 1984.)

Michael Miles, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Philip Morris, defended advertising eloquently in a trade ad:

> "Those of us in the business of building brands don't have to be sold on the importance of advertising or on the necessity for advertising. For me, there is still nothing more exciting in business than to watch effective advertising work its magic in the marketplace. For when a brand is acknowledged and accepted by the consumer, it becomes something much more than what it really is. . . we invest $2 billion annually in advertising. It's worth every penny. For we believe that a strong brand gives the consumer another whole set of reasons—emotional and personal—to act." (See Miles, 1992, p. 16.)

SUMMARY This chapter has reviewed many tobacco industry documents and marketing trade sources. The review revealed the importance of marketing and advertising to the vitality of this industry, and the many means used to create an appearance of healthfulness for various cigarette products, especially

those with nominally low yields. Several tactics were employed by the tobacco industry that misled consumers to perceive filtered and low-tar delivery products as safe or safer and as a viable alternative to quitting.

Figure 7-21
Carlton—"Isn't It Time You Started Thinking About Number One?" (1999)

Nicotine delivery is a design feature of cigarette products, and an essential part of the design. Tobacco company documents reflect a fear of consumers becoming weaned from smoking if they are not maintained with sufficient nicotine. Consumer acceptance of products that fail to deliver adequate nicotine satisfaction is also difficult to maintain.

Health concerns of a serious nature have been present among some smokers since at least the 1950s. Females, older, and more highly educated smokers have long been more likely to manifest health concerns. The ramifications of these health concerns are anxieties, conflicts, shame, and guilt, leading to a need for reassurance from advertising. In the 1950s, the promotion of filters provided this reassurance with very explicit verbal representations about the health protection that they offered. Once the nominal purpose of filtration was well understood by the consuming public, the healthfulness of filters was represented by more implicit means. For example, thinly veiled language ("hospital white" filters; "Alive with Pleasure") and visual "pictures of health" images were used, displaying bold and robust behavior in pristine environments.

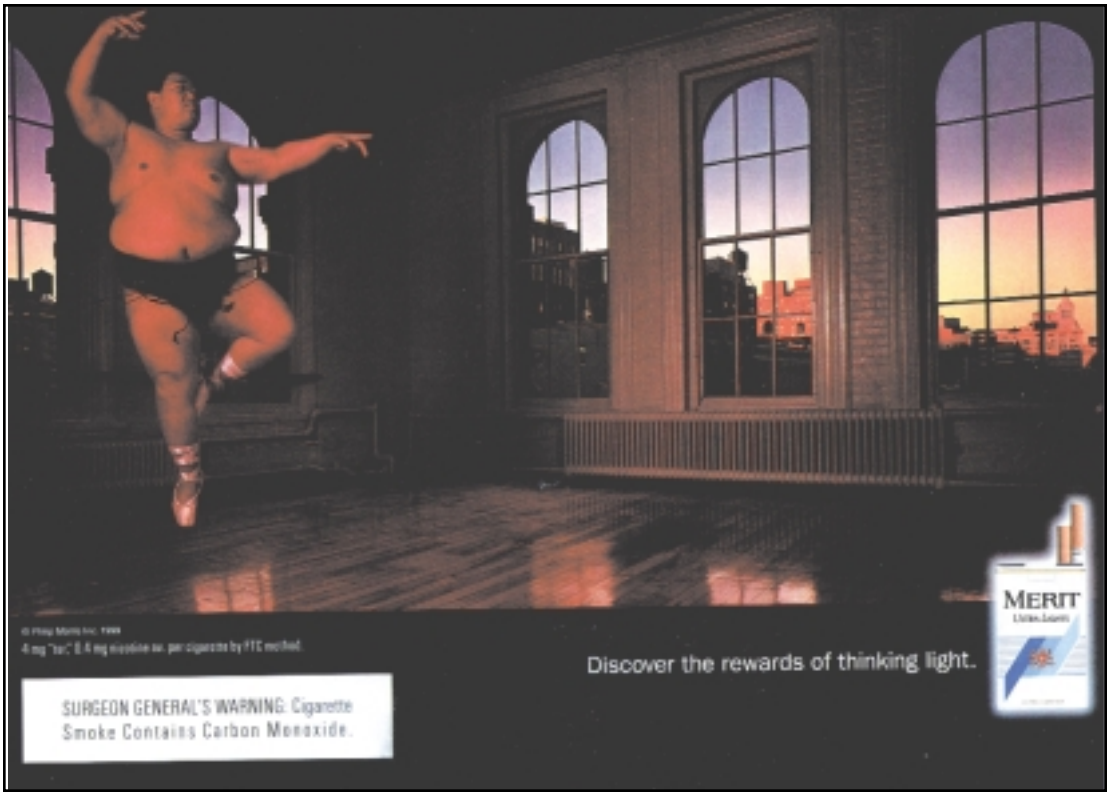
The image or illusion of filtration is essential to the selling of cigarettes, whereas the fact of filtration is not. Consumer (smoker) opinion and perceptions are what governs their behavior, not the medical or technological facts known to manufacturers and experts.

Many deceptive practices have been employed over the years (some continue to this date) that foster and perpetuate the illusion that various cigarette brands and product forms are relatively healthy. These tactics include:

- Using Medicinal Menthol. Menthol was introduced into some products capitalizing on its "pseudo-health" benefit, a consumer perception derived from experiencing menthol elsewhere in the medicinal context of cough and cold remedies.

- Loosening Filters. Once established in the public's mind as having effective filtration, Kent® offered several successive generations of product in the 1950s and 1960s that were heralded as "new and improved," but in fact contained ever more tar and nicotine.
- Using High-Tech Imagery. New filters were offered that seemed to be the fruits of scientific research and to have meaningful technological innovations, such as charcoal filters, dual filters, chambered filters, recessed "safety zoned" filters, gas trap filters, etc. Almost none of these specified the hazardous elements being filtered.
- Using Virtuous Brand Names and Descriptors. Brands were given names to imply state-of-the-art technology and/or a virtuous product, *e.g.*, Life®, Merit®, Now®, True®, or Vantage®. Product variations are described in technically meaningless, but seemingly quantitative, descriptors like "Mild," "Ultra," "Light," or "Super-Light."
- Adding a Very Low-Yield Product to a Product Line. Some product lines had wide-ranging tar and nicotine deliveries in the same brand family. The best of these levels was used for adver-

Figure 7-22
Merit Ultra Lights—Sumo Ballet Lighter Than Expected (1999)



tising purposes to reassure consumers while selling other product varieties. In some cases, the best product variant was rarely sold and was known as a phantom brand.

- Fooling the Machines and Using the Data to Fool Smokers. Filters and cigarette papers were developed starting in the 1950s that "air-conditioned" the smoke by diluting the smoke column with side-stream air. When smoked by machines as in the FTC tests, low-tar and low-nicotine numbers resulted, a desirable outcome for promotional purposes—but higher yields were ingested by real smokers, a desirable outcome for maintaining nicotine addiction.

Low-yield cigarettes were heavily promoted. Promotional programs for cigarettes have been lavishly funded in general, with advertising in multiple media. A disproportionate amount of this funding promoted low-yield products when they were introduced in the 1970s.

Little or no meaningful information is contained in promotions for a given cigarette, such as its ingredients and additives, the technology of filtration, the hazardous constituents of smoke, or the health consequences of smoking. Consumer ignorance and confusion has been persistent over many decades. While smokers who switch to low-yield brands manifest faith in their relative healthfulness, few consumers know the true delivery characteristics of the brands that they smoke, and even their general impressions are not very accurate.

Finally, testing of products by official Government agencies, such as the FTC, imbues the industry with a certain level of credibility, while providing Government-rated data that can be used for promotional purposes.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Advertisements of filtered and low-tar cigarettes were intended to reassure smokers (who were worried about the health risks of smoking) and were meant to prevent smokers from quitting based on those same concerns.

2. Advertising and promotional efforts were successful in getting smokers to use filtered and low-yield cigarette brands.

3. Internal tobacco company documents demonstrate that the cigarette manufacturers recognized the inherent deception of advertising that offered cigarettes as "Light" or "Ultra-Light," or as having the lowest tar and nicotine yields.

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*Dr. R. W. Pollay explains the bracketed numbers following some of the World Wide Web/trail-related References: The two numbers (A, B, [*e.g., *026, K0358]) following the descriptive information (author, title, date, etc.) are: (A) a sequence number for the authors' unique set of documents, and (B) the number that the National Cancer Institute or others used for identifying documents. This latter sequence is the more helpful for the reader, as it should link to a database at the National Cancer Institute. The Institute provided the authors with a lengthy inventory of documents from which items were selected by these numbers.*

Note as to source of sources: Items 001-064 were supplied by KBM Group as the contractor for National Cancer Institute project on "Cigarettes with Low Machine-Measured Yields of Tar and Nicotine," and bear both the "TIPS" and "K" numbers in parentheses (e.g., 001, K0474). Items 065-081 were from sundry alternative sources, including the (Canadian) Physicians for a Smoke Free Canada Web site. Items 101-114 were from various corporate and trial Web sites, and were provided on request by Ms. Nadine Leavell, archivist of the Roswell Park Cancer Institute, Buffalo, New York.

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