

Tobacco advertising in South Africa with specific reference to magazines

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Rationale. A ban on tobacco advertising forms an integral component of tobacco control strategies, and needs to be considered in South Africa as a matter of urgency.

Objectives. To obtain baseline data on tobacco advertising expenditure in the South African media, and to compare brands used to target different groups in magazines.

Methods. Advertising expenditure (totals and tobacco-related) for 1991 and 1993 was obtained from Adindex. Ten magazines, each with circulations of over 100 000, directed at four different target groups, were selected. For 3 months in 1993, total and tobacco advertising expenditure, brand placement and magazine demographics were determined.

Results. Tobacco-related expenditure constituted 4,8% of the R3 billion spent on advertising in 1993. Print (including magazines) and radio together accounted for 72% of all tobacco advertising, while cinema and outdoor advertising were most dependent on the tobacco industry for revenue. Annualised advertising spending for the 10 magazines reached an estimated R230 million, of which tobacco 'adspend' accounted for 6,4%. The highest percentage of tobacco adspend (20,3%) was for a men's 'soft-porn' magazine. For 26 of 30 issues studied, tobacco adverts were on the back cover. Brand targeting was evident in black, women's, and family magazines.

There was not a single feature article on the adverse effects of smoking on health in any of the magazines during the 3-month period. Only 2 magazines had single sentences in their health columns mentioning that smoking was bad for health. In a third magazine, one opinion piece devoted a full page to criticising the anti-tobacco lobby!

Conclusion. Tobacco advertising, through radio and outdoor advertising, reaches children and illiterate communities in peri-urban and rural areas. Tobacco advertising in magazines targets specific consumers, such as blacks and women. For most magazines, tobacco adspend constitutes less than 10% of the total. A total ban on tobacco advertising in the media in general and certainly in magazines would not have adverse economic effects and would promote health.

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There has been worldwide concern in recent years about the impact of tobacco advertising on cigarette consumption, particularly among women, children and minority groups. Health authorities believe that advertising contributes to the initiation and maintenance of smoking habits in adolescents,^{1,2} particularly in countries such as South Africa where smoking rates are increasing rapidly off a low base. The prevalence of smoking among blacks has increased markedly over the past decade and a half; the proportion of black women who smoke is still low, however, and the age of starting to smoke appears to be dropping.³ Unless active tobacco control measures are introduced, the country faces a major epidemic of tobacco-related deaths and diseases in the next century.

Tobacco advertising bans have been effective in reducing consumption in a number of countries, including, for example, New Zealand and Canada, where bans were associated with rapid declines in consumption.⁴

Recent work, mainly in the USA, has shown clearly how tobacco advertisements help to create a positive image of smoking,⁵ particularly among children in respect of Joe Camel cartoons, or among women when the Virginia Slims 'Pretty Woman' image is used. An additional, more indirect impact of tobacco advertising has been quantified in a statistical analysis by Warner *et al.*,⁶ in a review of 99 US magazines over 25 years. He showed that the amount spent on cigarette advertisements in a magazine was associated with a diminished likelihood that the magazine would cover issues relating to the hazards of smoking. His analysis showed that health professionals and critics of journalism who had in the past charged that magazines which depend on revenues from cigarette advertising were less likely to publish articles dealing with hazards of smoking, were in fact correct. Anecdotal evidence and confidentially gained information from senior reporters on women's magazines confirm that this also applies in South Africa.

The Tobacco Products Control Act of 1993 provides for health warnings to be placed on tobacco adverts and therefore does not go as far as calling for a complete ban on advertising, despite the fact that a national survey of South African adults (smokers and non-smokers) showed that 58,4% would support a ban on tobacco advertising in newspapers/magazines, 61% would support a ban on advertising on radio, and 58,7% would support a ban on billboard advertising.⁷ These constitute the major vehicles by which tobacco advertising is targeted to communities.

Importantly, with regard to newspapers/magazines, the majority of smokers (54,5%), non-smokers (59,2%) and ex-smokers (65,6%) supported a ban. While these figures are lower than those in Europe, where 73% support a total advertising ban,⁷ they are extraordinarily high given the fact that national mass media campaigns against the harmful effects of smoking have yet to be put into effect.

The objectives of this study were: (i) to estimate the level and distribution of tobacco advertising expenditure in the media; (ii) to provide baseline data on expenditure on tobacco advertising ('adspend') in selected South African magazines in order to determine whether an advertising ban would have serious economic implications for the print media; and (iii) to compare brand use among different target groups. It was hoped that this study would assist in future policy development relating to tobacco advertising bans.

Methods

Total advertising expenditure in all national media, and the amount spent on tobacco-related products for 1991 and 1993, was obtained from Adindex, which provides national information on advertising spending to the industry.

Ten magazines with circulations per edition of more than 100 000 were selected from four defined target groups of readers. These target groups were blacks (*Bona* and *Pace* were used); men (*Scope* and *Car*); women (*Sarie*, *Fair Lady* and *Cosmopolitan*); and family readers (*Huisgenoot*, *You* and *Your Family*). For 3 months in 1993 total advertising expenditure, brand placements and magazine demographics were determined. One issue of each of the 10 magazines was screened each month, making a total of 30 magazines.

Since the advertising managers of the various magazines could not divulge the exact amount their clients paid for advertising (privileged information), the calculations were based on freely available advertising rates and therefore may not reflect discounts for multiple advertisements.

To calculate annual tobacco adspend, expenditures over the three issues were extrapolated to the yearly rate and the proportion of extrapolated annualised advertising expenditure was calculated for each magazine.

Results

Table I indicates that in 1993 tobacco-related advertising constituted 4,8% of the almost R3 billion spent on advertising nationally. The two most important media used for tobacco products were the print media (including magazines), which accounted for 40,8% of all tobacco advertising, and radio (31,2%). However, these media were among the least dependent on tobacco advertising for total advertising revenue, with tobacco advertising constituting 4,8% of all print advertising and 10,9% of all radio advertising in 1993. The only significant increase in tobacco advertising spending over the 3-year period was for cinema advertising, from 28,6% of adspend in 1991 to 34,8% in 1993.

Table I. Tobacco advertising expenditure in South Africa, 1991 and 1993*

	1991		1993		Tobacco adspend in various media (%)
	Total (all products) (R million)	Tobacco products (% of total)	Total (all products) (R million)	Tobacco products (% of total)	
Print	1 076	4,0	1 245	4,8	40,8
Radio	258	12,6	413	10,9	31,2
Outdoor	65	20,5	109	19,9	15,0
Cinema	28	28,6	31	34,8	7,5
Television	839	0,7	1 200	0,7	5,5
Total	2 267	4,6	2 998	4,8	100,0

*Source: IBIS/MRA: Adindex 1993 (up to November).

Table II provides information on the annualised tobacco adspend, percentage of total adspend on tobacco, official circulation and readership figures, and percentage of readers estimated to be women.

Overall, R15 million was spent on tobacco advertising in the 10 magazines in 1993. This constituted 6,4% of the total advertising expenditure in these magazines of approximately R233 000 000. For *Scope*, the proportion of adspend on tobacco was exceptionally high at 20,3%. The lowest figure was found in *Bona* at 4,1%, with all other magazines being in the range of 5 - 8%. Importantly, in absolute terms, in excess of R1 million per year is spent on tobacco advertising in almost all of the magazines studied.

Female readers predominate in the women's and family magazine categories. Of readers of *Bona*, a predominantly black magazine, 49% were women. *Cosmopolitan* has a fairly significant male readership and, as will be seen later, this has already influenced the type of tobacco advertising being placed.

An analysis of the placement of tobacco advertisements showed that in 26 of the 30 editions a tobacco advertisement appeared on the back page of the magazine, while in 22 a tobacco advertisement appeared on one of the first three pages. Thus, while total percentage adspend on

Table II. Tobacco advertising in South African magazines, 1993

Target, name	Annual tobacco adspend (R)	Adspend on tobacco (% of total)	Circulation	Readership	% women
Blacks					
<i>Bona</i> *	744 508	4,1	268 289	2 910 000	49
<i>Pace</i> *	703 260	6,0	135 000	1 499 000	40
Men					
<i>Scope</i> †	1 001 328	20,3	153 292	767 000	26
<i>Car</i> *	955 680	6,8	128 734	513 000	16
Women					
<i>Sarie</i> †	1 591 600	8,4	227 334	821 000	71
<i>Fair Lady</i> †	1 835 520	5,5	162 222	899 000	73
<i>Cosmopolitan</i> *	1 166 696	6,4	108 101	567 000	65
Family					
<i>Huisgenoot</i> ‡	4 553 450	7,0	514 818	2 200 000	54
<i>You</i> ‡	1 864 583	6,5	232 128	1 315 000	63
<i>Your Family</i> *	489 060	6,1	210 801	561 000	85
	14 905 685	6,4			

* Monthly.
† Fortnightly.
‡ Weekly.

tobacco may still be relatively low, the tobacco industry is ensuring that they select the most visible place for their advertisements. Importantly, and beyond the scope of the study, it became clear that these trends applied to most South African magazines and in particular to the new men's 'soft-porn' magazines such as *Penthouse*, *Hustler* and *Playboy*, all of which carry tobacco advertisements on their back page and on one of the first two pages, and which appear to be using tobacco advertising as extensively as *Scope*.

In terms of specific brand placement and use, Craven A Menthol cigarette adverts were only found in the black magazines. Adverts for Lexington Roasted were found in the black magazines, but those for Lexington Light appeared in the general men's magazines. Among the magazines that target women and families, Satin Leaf, Courtleigh and Cartier-Vendôme predominated, and were not found in other magazines. A new appearance on the South African scene, the French cigarette Mild Gauloise Blondes, was found in *Scope*, *You* and *Car* magazine. In the magazines for men, Chesterfield, John Rolfe and Lexington Light predominated. Importantly, all Camel adverts were double-page spreads and were found in men's magazines and *Cosmopolitan*, indicating *Cosmopolitan's* realisation of their high male readership.

Analysis of the demographic information indicates that within each of the broad categories magazine readership appears to be mainly in the middle- to upper-income groups. However, black readership is spread more widely across the social class spectrum.

Discussion

Wallack and Montgomery⁸ recently indicated that advertising plays an important role in influencing the ways in which health information reaches populations in developing countries. Tobacco advertising in fact distorts public health messages and is particularly successful in influencing poor and uneducated people to start and continue smoking.⁸ Furthermore, the latest report of the Surgeon-General⁹ concluded that tobacco advertising 'increases young people's risk of smoking by affecting their perceptions of the pervasiveness, image and function of smoking'. Tobacco advertising bans are therefore recognised as a crucial and successful component of a comprehensive tobacco control programme.^{9,10} Other components include increasing price, providing community and school education programmes, banning sales to children, and restricting smoking in public places. Here, we focus entirely on tobacco advertising in South Africa.

Tobacco advertising as a whole does not constitute a significant proportion of total advertising expenditure in South Africa. However, tobacco advertising expenditure is an important source for cinema adverts, outdoor/billboard advertising and, to a lesser extent, radio. These media effectively reach children, illiterate adults and the poorest communities¹¹ and indicate the value the tobacco industry attaches to building new markets. Les Holley,¹² marketing director for Rent-A-Sign, emphasised this recently when he commented that 'we are looking more at mass market communication. We have got to get through to advertisers that if they want to build brands, outdoors is vital, especially

for illiterate populations.' The strength of industry opposition to attempts to ban tobacco advertising indicates their realisation of the effectiveness of bans.

Internationally, the tobacco industry is increasingly targeting women, and in the UK and the USA women's magazines are one of the main ways that tobacco companies reach women.^{13,14} This strategy appears to be reflected in South Africa, where tobacco advertising in the South African magazines studied is of brands that target blacks and women. In these groups it still constitutes a small proportion of total advertising. An analysis of Adindex data indicates that of the R145 000 000 spent on tobacco advertising in 1993, 41% was spent on magazine/print media, and 31% on radio advertising. Magazine/print media, while not having radio's reach into the deep rural and peri-urban areas, do reach crucial opinion-makers in the cities.¹⁰ Further, they reach urban, relatively young, middle-income communities¹¹ and thus effectively target groups most vulnerable to the virtually unopposed impact of tobacco advertising.

An average of 6,5% of the advertising in the 3 family magazines studied was for tobacco, and this amounted to nearly half of the annual tobacco adspend for all the magazines reviewed (R7 million of R15 million). These magazines, particularly the Afrikaans-medium *Huisgenoot*, have high circulations and readerships which include children and adolescents. Research in the USA² has shown that two of the most important predictors of adolescent smoking were friends' smoking status and exposure to cigarette advertising. The study found that adolescents with a high exposure to cigarette advertising were significantly more likely to be smokers, according to several measures of smoking behaviour, than those with low exposure to cigarette advertising.

Further analysis of the magazines indicated extremely low coverage of tobacco-related health issues; in fact, there was not a single article in any of the magazines during the 3-month period on the adverse effects of smoking on health! While 5 of the 10 magazines have regular health columns, only 2 of these 5 made any mention of hazards of smoking, in both cases only in a single sentence contained in an item in the health column. In contrast, in a third magazine, a full page was devoted to an opinion article which criticised the non-smoking lobby! This was in sharp contrast to two other magazines, *Living & Loving* and *Reader's Digest*. Neither of these carry tobacco advertising and both regularly carry information on the harmful effects (both passive and direct) of tobacco. Attempts to encourage magazines to carry information relating to the hazards of tobacco use has generally proved to be unsuccessful, senior staff members of the magazines clearly stating their concern about offending the tobacco industry if articles that document the harmful effects of tobacco are placed in their magazines.

It is important to ask whether a ban on tobacco advertising would improve the position with regard to the reporting of the harmful effects of tobacco. In the USA, it is clear that the diversification that has occurred with regard to companies such as RJR/Nabisco and Philip Morris (in its acquisition of General Foods, Suchard and Kraft) has already placed impediments in the face of tobacco advertising bans. The diversification of the South African group Richmond (through its subsidiary Vendôme) in the luxury market, and through funding of accessories such as

Cartier, Dunhill, Mont Blanc pens and Chloe perfume, is a deliberate attempt to link cigarette brands with fashion images.¹⁵ Furthermore, in the USA, as restrictions on tobacco advertising have tightened, the industry has transferred its marketing budget to promotional activities (sports sponsorship, logos on clothing, free handouts).⁹ Already this is occurring in South Africa. For example, a reporter for *Marketplace* recently commented¹⁶ about the Benson and Hedges campaign that 'conveying the youthfulness and vibrancy of the brand is also the rationale behind the continued heavy sponsorship of cricket. Bates' research predicts that cricket spectatorship will grow enormously in the black market in future, and that money invested now will achieve worthwhile returns. Cricket also fulfils one of the promises which the advertising makes — 'share the feeling' — the TV commercials show crowds of people sharing the feeling of one-day matches.' They do concede at the end of the article that one question which continues to threaten large-scale projects of Benson and Hedges is the future of the government's policy on tobacco advertising and sports sponsorship.

The overall impact of tobacco advertising in magazines appears to be twofold. Firstly it acts as a stimulant to readers to start smoking, supports the impression that it is a socially desirable activity, and thus helps to maintain smokers in their current habit. For example, recent research clearly shows that tobacco advertising plays a key role in the smoking initiation process in adolescents.² Secondly, and as importantly, through reduced coverage of tobacco's ill-effects it results in an underestimation of the impact of tobacco relative to a range of other public health issues.¹⁷

With the exception of *Scope* and possibly other men's magazines in the soft-porn category, tobacco advertising still constitutes a relatively small proportion of total magazine advertising. A total ban would therefore not cause serious adverse economic effects, but would rather promote health. The European Community came to similar conclusions and found that where total bans were enforced, total advertising continued to increase¹ and therefore advertising bans on tobacco did not have any adverse economic impact!² In addition, by implementing a substantial health promotion tax which would accrue revenue from increasing the excise duty on cigarettes, more than R1 billion could be raised. This could be used to place advertising promoting all aspects of health in the same media that carry tobacco advertising at present.

The tobacco industry, in advance of a total ban, will try to lobby for voluntary agreements and encourage health warnings rather than total bans. The former has been shown internationally¹⁸ and locally¹⁹ not to work. The only solution, and a sensible one from a public health perspective, is to act more assertively and ban all tobacco advertising as a matter of urgency.

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Dokter en digter

Fantasia II: Die nag

Saans as die skaduwees sluip oor die see
En die nag met goulig die deinings omboor
Waar langzaam die heuwels hul pragkleur verloor

Swart soos die donker fluweel wat die nag
Vou om die slapende see
Skyn helderwit maanskyn en gloeiende rose

Dis nag op die velde. O wonderuur!
Die Suiderkruis staan in sterre-vuur
Van nag se vleuels om die see gevou

O die pyn van polsende kleure
En 'k weet nie
Of ek moet lag nie of ween

O wat is dit wat so sug en stem
En waarom wink die bome!
Dis die wind, my kind, die suiderwind
Wat jou opwek uit jou drome

Op maan bepoeierde nagte
As gepluimde peerboomtakke bloeisels sprinkel
Wit soos die lig van die maan

Hoog oor die heuwels swaai die maan
Oor eindelose watervlaktes sny
Die dowwe maan tot by die dowwe kim.

Nou gee die stil blou nagte soos blomme vir dief
Die mooiste geure wat hul het
En dit vir jou en my.

'Ekuphumleni'