

Formula One and Tobacco: The World's most dangerous sport?

Evidence to the FIA regarding the link between tobacco advertising/sponsorship and increased smoking

An open letter to Max Mosley, President of the FIA - 9th July 1998

Mr. Max Mosley
President
Federation Internationale d'Automobile
8 Place de la Concorde
75008 Paris
FRANCE



9th July 1998

Dear Mr. Mosley,

As we welcome the Formula One World Championship to Britain, I write to provide further evidence to support the contention that tobacco advertising, especially through the sponsorship of Formula One, increases consumption of cigarettes and helps to nurture smoking in teenagers.

We were very encouraged by your declaration at the Australian Grand Prix that the FIA would end tobacco sponsorship by 2002, four years ahead of the time required by the EU Tobacco Advertising Directive, if you could be convinced that there is a link between advertising, sponsorship and smoking. This is a very positive and welcome initiative.

To this end, wish to offer evidence drawn from confidential tobacco industry documents released through litigation in the United States. This shows the *intent* and *rationale* for using Formula One to market cigarettes to the young. From this and the evidence more widely available, I hope that you will conclude that it is much more likely than not that tobacco sponsorship of Formula One is contributing to increased smoking and therefore to additional unnecessary illness and untimely death which starts with the recruitment of teenage smokers. While the FIA's emphasis on driving safety is impressive, we believe the sport poses a significant danger to health by virtue of its association with tobacco.

Given what is at stake, you would have to be very confident that there is no increase in cigarette consumption resulting from the US\$300 million of tobacco money that enters Formula One each year. We urge you to look closely at the evidence, treat the tobacco industry's arguments with due scepticism, and take the necessary steps to end tobacco sponsorship of Formula One in 2002.

I recognise that you will need the support of the broad motorsport community, and I hope that this evidence will help you to secure such support. We hope that, as a minimum, you will respond by appointing a respected independent assessor to review the evidence and announce a timetable for the assessment. We are confident that in a fair review, the link will be established with sufficient clarity to justify ending tobacco sponsorship by 2002.

Yours sincerely,



Clive Bates
Director

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Introduction - an end to tobacco sponsorship in Formula One by 2002?

On the eve of the 1998 Australian Grand Prix in Melbourne on 5th March, Max Mosley, President of the FIA announced that Formula One would end its use of tobacco sponsorship by 2002 if it could be shown that tobacco advertising encourages people to smoke. The statement was released by the FIA and is referred to here as 'The Melbourne Declaration' - see below. This would mean ending tobacco sponsorship up to four years ahead of the recently agreed European Union Directive which requires EU Member States to ban tobacco sponsorship in Formula One no later than 2006. ASH believes that required evidence is available and compelling and that the FIA and its World Assembly should act on Mr. Mosley's offer. The evidence is in two forms:

1. There is a substantial body of independent research that shows that tobacco advertising increases overall tobacco consumption and is one important factor in nurturing smoking behaviour in adolescents and children. This is disputed by the tobacco industry and consultants paid by the tobacco industry, but widely accepted by Governments.
2. Confidential tobacco industry documents released during litigation in the United States. Whatever the outcome, these documents reveal the tobacco industry's clear intent to market to teenagers and the importance it attaches to sponsorship of motor-racing - and especially to Formula One - in its marketing activities.

The primary purpose of this report is to provide the evidence to support Point 2 above.

The Melbourne Declaration

***Statement by the
FIA on tobacco
sponsorship in
Formula One***



Since discussions on the proposed European Commission Directive on tobacco advertising began last year, the FIA has consistently said that, if presented with evidence of a direct link between tobacco advertising/sponsorship and smoking, it would act to eliminate tobacco advertising/sponsorship from Formula One.

The proposed EC Directive as agreed in Luxembourg last year provides the sport with the flexibility and time it needs to take decisive action in this area. The FIA therefore intends to

and is discussing the issue with the World Health Organisation.

The FIA could bring in a world-wide ban on tobacco advertising/sponsorship in the Formula One World Championship on expiry of the current Concorde Agreement between the FIA and the teams in 2002. Such a ban, which could take effect before the deadline set in the EC Directive, would apply to all Formula One Grands Prix, including those held outside the European Union. It would therefore provide a powerful supplement to the EC Directive.

Melbourne, 5 March 1998

FIA's proposed evaluation of the evidence

At the Monaco Grand Prix, Max Mosley elaborated on the Melbourne Declaration.

***Extracts from the
press conference
of Mr. Max Mosley
1998 Monaco
Grand Prix***



To remind you, we said that if convincing evidence were to be offered to show that the promotion of tobacco through Formula 1 racing is responsible for persuading people who would not otherwise smoke to take up the habit, then we - the FIA - would ourselves eliminate it before 2006. We have received a certain amount of evidence to this effect, and we are now considering the best way to evaluate that evidence. Rather than leaving the final judgement to myself, or the FIA generally, we are looking into the possibility of raising a formal inquiry, under the direction of an independent assessor, to study the evidence that has been offered.

Monaco, 23 May 1998

Test of evidence

A decision has not yet been made regarding the appointment of an independent assessor or the terms of reference of an assessment. Given that lives are at stake, it would be wrong to hold out for absolute proof. It is unlikely that a survey that isolates Formula One from all other influences could ever be devised and therefore absolute conclusive proof is unrealistic. For the same reason, it will be virtually impossible to prove there is no effect. As in all disputes, a test of evidence is required. The great danger posed by smoking, and the obvious common sense idea that advertising influences teenagers and increases smoking suggests that the evidence should be evaluated on "balance of probabilities" basis - the same test used in civil legal action. The alternative would be to seek evidence that establishes the case "beyond reasonable doubt" - the test used in criminal legal action. The danger with using "beyond reasonable doubt" is that the FIA could continue to act as if there was no relationship between

advertising and increased smoking, when in fact the evidence suggested it was more likely than not that there is a link. The result would be unnecessary deaths.

Key findings in this report for the FIA and its independent assessor

The documents reveal a picture of the tobacco companies that is at great variance with their public position. From this assessment we conclude:

- that the tobacco companies were driven by an obsessive need to recruit *young* smokers to satisfy their market demands which required vast numbers of new smoking recruits - in the UK alone they need 300 new smokers a day - and that for decades tobacco companies marketed their products to young people, including to children too young to purchase the products legally
- that this obsession with new, young smokers is evident in companies' market research on teenagers, some as young as 12-, 13- and 14- years old and in one instance *as young as five years old*
- that studies showed that the majority of smokers start using tobacco while in their teenage years, and that hardly anyone starts smoking in their twenties but that those who started at around the ages of 12 or 13 years old often want to quit by the age of 16, concerned that smoking was damaging their ability to participate in sports. Knowing this, the tobacco companies sought to lure and addict children to cigarettes before the desire to stop grew strong, and sought sponsorship deals with sport to counteract any concerns they may have about the health dangers of smoking
- that tobacco companies knew that lifelong brand preferences are formed in the early teenage years and that increased visibility for their products could shape these preferences
- that sponsorship of Formula One is the jewel in tobacco's crown - it is the pinnacle of successful, glamour-laden global events with a massive potential to reach the young through both the televised events and the spin-off merchandise
- that sponsorship of Formula One and motor sport allows tobacco companies to advertise their products, so circumventing the increasing global restrictions on conventional advertising, and increase market share by encouraging new, young smokers - and not as the industry claims, to encourage brand loyalty in adults.

Other evidence - studies linking advertising and smoking

This section gives a very brief overview of the most authoritative statements on the relationship between advertising and consumption.

- The most comprehensive study of the link between advertising and tobacco consumption was published in 1993 by Chief Economic Adviser to the Department of Health, Dr. Clive Smee. After reviewing 212 'time series' correlating advertising spend and total tobacco consumption, Smee concluded *"The balance of evidence thus supports the conclusion that advertising does have a positive effect on consumption."* Smee also examined in detail the effects of tobacco advertising bans in four countries and found that banning advertising resulted in reductions in consumption of 4%-9% in the countries surveyed. He concluded: *"In each case the banning of advertising was followed by a fall in smoking on a scale which cannot be reasonably attributed to other factors."*
- A comprehensive meta-analysis of econometric findings from time series research found a positive association between advertising expenditure and cigarette consumption. The study

showed that, on average, a 10% increase in advertising expenditure would lead to a 0.6% increase in consumption.

- The US Surgeon General in his 1989 report highlighted the difficulties in designing studies that prove the point definitively, but concluded: "*the collective empirical, experiential and logical evidence makes it more likely than not that advertising and promotional activities do stimulate cigarette consumption.*"

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1. Why the tobacco industry inevitably markets cigarettes to teenagers

- **This section. The tobacco companies are in vigorous competition for young smokers despite their public denials.**
- Section 2. Tobacco advertising is used to sell the product to teenagers
- Section 3. Sponsorship of motorsport is a particularly effective form of tobacco advertising for the key youth market
- Section 4. Sponsorship of motorsport may also be used to counter the sports-driven desire to quit smoking among older teenagers.

Market logic. The documents reveal the tobacco companies market cigarettes to children and teenagers and that this is driven by the realities of the cigarette marketplace. As the tobacco companies know, 90 per cent of smokers start by the age of 20 with around two thirds starting by the age of 13. Brand preferences are formed at an early stage. Maintained profitability and even survival of the industry depended on success and sales among the under-18s. These are the years when brand preferences are formed - inspiring loyalty among this age-group guaranteed market growth in their adulthood, which in turn reduced the need to attract established, reluctant to change adult smokers. So desperate were companies to attract teen smokers that one company referred to its failure to do so in the face of its competitors success at doing so as "the doomsday scenario".

The documents show that the industry systematically set out to lure children and teenagers into smoking, and that in doing so they:

- Examined the smoking attitudes of children as young as five with some studies failing to set a lower age group - as one tobacco executive said: "they got lips, we want them".
- Pitched their appeal directly to the young
- Set out to portray cigarettes as an illicit pleasure which, like sex, is part of initiation into adulthood. By avoiding childish imagery, the tobacco companies expertly appealed to the aspirational, insecure feelings of their child audience.
- Set out to equate cigarettes with, among other things, independence and masculinity and that Formula One was particularly important in shaping this image.
- Set out to equate their cigarettes with fun and health, quelling any health fears child smokers may have by advertising in sports magazines and sponsoring popular sports.

RJ Reynolds explains the market dynamics

Importance of Younger Adult Smokers

Why, then, are younger adult smokers important to RJR? Younger adult smokers are the only source of replacement smokers. Repeated government studies (Appendix B) have shown that:

- Less than one-third of smokers (31 percent) start after 18.
- Only 5 percent of smokers start after age 24.

Thus, today's younger adult smoking behavior will largely determine the trend of industry volume over the next several decades. If younger adults turn away from smoking, the industry must decline, just as a population which does not give birth will eventually dwindle. In such an environment, a positive RJR sales trend would require disproportionate share gains and/or steep price increases (which could depress volume). (Younger adults are elsewhere defined as 14-24).

Brand loyalty is formed in youth

1957: A Philip Morris Executive writes that

"Hitting the youth can be more efficient even though the cost to reach them is higher, because they are willing to experiment, they have more influence over others in their age group than they will later in life, and they are far more loyal to their starting brand".

14 year olds fit the young smoker profile

1971: An internal RJ Reynolds document outlines that

"the lower age limit for the profile of young smokers is to remain at 14".

Need youth to survive and prosper

1973: Claude Teague, Assistant Chief in R&D at RJ Reynolds, writes a paper: "*Some Thoughts About New Brands of Cigarettes for the Youth Market*";

"At the outset it should be said that we are presently, and I believe unfairly, constrained from directly promoting cigarettes to the youth market ... if our company is to survive and prosper, over the long term we must get our share of the youth market.

Today's youth is tomorrow's cigarette business

A RJ Reynolds Marketing plan for 1975 outlines one of the four "Key Opportunity Areas" to

"Increase our young adult franchise ... in 1960, this young adult market, the 14-24 age group, represented 21% of the population ... they will represent 27% of the population in 1975. They represent tomorrow's cigarette business..."

Success with the young means "phenomenal" sales growth

A report by a Philip Morris researcher Myron E. Johnston to the head of Research at Philip Morris, Robert B. Seligman states that:

"Marlboro's phenomenal growth rate in the past has been attributable in large part to our high market penetration among young smokers ... 15 to 19 years old ... my own data, which includes younger teenagers, shows even higher Marlboro market penetration among 15-17-year-olds ...".

- Teens are "tomorrow's potential regular customers"** 1981: A Philip Morris researcher writes to the Vice President of research and development at Philip Morris in Richmond:
 "...Today's teenager is tomorrow's potential regular customer, and the overwhelming majority of smokers first begin to smoke while in their teens ...it is during the teenage years that the initial brand choice is made."
- The report analyses data for smokers as young as 12.
- Young smokers critical to growth -they're the replacement smokers** A 1984 RJR report, "Young Adult Smokers: Strategies and Opportunities" warns:
 "Younger adult smokers have been the critical factor in the growth and decline of every major brand and company over the last 50 years. They will continue to be just as important to brands/companies in the future... Brands/companies which fail to attract their fair share of younger adult smokers face an uphill battle..."
- Tobacco needs 5000 child smokers every day** A 1987 study into Tobacco Advertising and Consumption remarks that:
 "Approximately 60 per cent of smokers start by the age of 13 and fully 90 per cent before the age of 20. These statistics translate in to the need for more than 5,000 children and teenagers to begin smoking every day to maintain the current size of the smoking population."
- The industry is dominated by companies who succeed with young smokers** ~1987/ 88: Imperial Tobacco's (Canada) marketing plan states:
 "If the last ten years have taught us anything, it is that the industry is dominated by the companies who respond most to the needs of younger smokers..."
 The document defines "target groups" for various brands as "men 12-17" and "men and women 12-34."
- Failure to attract them leads to the "doomsday scenario"** A memo from RJ Reynolds shows that they were very concerned that their Winston brand was losing market share to industry leader Marlboro:
 "It's what we've been calling the 'doomsday scenario': an acute deficiency of young adult smokers, apparently implying Marlboro's final domination and our utter demise within a generation."
- 1997 - tobacco company admits targeting 'youth'** In March 1997 US tobacco company Liggett dropped a bombshell when it became the first company to acknowledge that the tobacco industry markets to 'youth', which means
 "those under 18 years of age, and not just those 18-24 years of age."
- Evidence out - industry studied five year olds** 1998: A document by BAT's Canadian subsidiary is cited as one reason why a US judge orders 39,000 previously secret industry documents to be released. The document - a report on youth marketing - studies young people's motivation for starting and their brand preferences, as well as the starting behaviour of children as young as five years old.
- One CEO admitted "I'm** 1998: Andrew J. Schindler, President and CEO of RJ Reynolds Tobacco Company testified at the Minnesota trial. Shown RJR documents that had targeted children, he said:

embarrassed"

"I'm embarrassed for the company. We don't track 14-to 17-year-olds today. I think it is wrong, frankly stupid and unnecessary. It certainly doesn't happen today. We shouldn't be discussing 14-year-olds in any way, shape or form".

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2. How tobacco advertising is used to attract teenagers

- Section 1. The tobacco companies are in vigorous competition for young smokers despite their public denials.
- **This section. Tobacco advertising is used to sell the product to teenagers**
- Section 3. Sponsorship of motorsport is a particularly effective form of tobacco advertising for the key youth market
- Section 4. Sponsorship of motorsport may also be used to counter the sports-driven desire to quit smoking among older teenagers.

In many ways, tobacco is a straightforward business. Teenagers are enticed into smoking because it seems an adult thing to do. It seems this way because adults do it and because the ideas of sophistication, elegance, cool, machismo and excitement are remorselessly promoted and reinforced through cigarette marketing. Advertising is designed to create, reinforce or amplify positive associations with cigarettes. These are *unavoidably* appealing to adolescents who are often struggling with their self esteem and to forge an identity.

The precise appeal to young people is sophisticated - no-one markets to teenagers by using childish images. In fact, smoking is portrayed as an adult and smart activity, often with a puzzle or insider's joke, and hence smoking becomes seen as an important 'rite of passage' to adulthood. In the case of Formula One, smoking is linked to another particularly important rite of passage, driving. It is hard to imagine a more potent aspirational role model for a teenager than an F1 driver and a more aspirational setting than the Formula One racing car and circuit. The puzzle/joke format was used during the British Grand prix last year to overcome voluntary restrictions: **R?** replaced Rothmans and **Bitten and Hisses** replaced Benson and Hedges. The result was probably *more* effective.

The extracts below show how advertising is used to create appealing associations for cigarettes.

- Use an image that will appeal.** Late 50's: Philip Morris starts using the Cowboy image on its commercials, because the image
- Enter the Marlboro Cowboy** "would turn the rookie smokers on to Marlboro .. the right image to capture the youth market's fancy ..a perfect symbol of independence and individualistic rebellion"
- As one executive who worked on Marlboro recalled
- "When you see teenage boys - people the cigarette companies aren't supposed to be targeting in the first place -- going crazy for this guy, you know they're hitting their target.
- Its appeal is admired by others in the industry** 1965: Robert Wald, Counsel for Lorillard's complains that Marlboro proceeds with a
- "great campaign with probably the greatest appeal to kids: the gnarled, weather beaten cowboys - the hottest virility, sexual symbol going."
- Use images to lure teen smokers. Then the addiction takes over.** 1969: A draft report to the Board of Directors of Philip Morris states:
- "a cigarette for the beginner is a symbolic act. I am no longer my mother's child, I'm tough, I am an adventurer, I'm not square. ... As the force from the psychological symbolism subsides, the pharmacological effect takes over to sustain the habit"
- Lifestyle used to appeal to young** 1977: A working paper prepared for Imperial Tobacco says:
- "By younger smokers, we mean people ranging from starters of the smoking habit up to and through the seeking and setting of their independent adult lifestyle. Relevant lifestyle is the key to the brand's positioning...."
- Ads get around the problem - How to sell "death"** "The problem is how do you sell death? How do you sell a poison that kills 350,000 people per year, a 1,000 people a day? You do it with the great open spaces ... the mountains, the open places, the lakes coming up to the shore. They do it with healthy young people. They do it with athletes. How could a whiff of a cigarette be of any harm in a situation like that? It couldn't be - there's too much fresh air, too much health - too much absolute exuding of youth and vitality - that's the way they do it". (Fritz Gahagan, once marketing consultant for five tobacco companies, 1988)

- The 1990s - Billboard Cowboy gets an update. Makes way for motor bikes, fast cars and 'sexual prowess'**
- 1992: A document entitled "*The Viability of the Marlboro Man Among the 18-24 Segment*" prepared for Philip Morris, concludes:
- "The 'Racing' advertising was perceived to be consistent with the cowboy image, but with a more modern and younger focus.... The Marlboro 'Motorcycle' advertising presented even a more modern Marlboro Man. It had the same limitations as the racing ads (i.e. being a sponsorship), however, it took the spirit of adventure and going to the edge further.... Sexual prowess is of much concern. The Marlboro man can have whomever he wants because he is at the top of the dominance hierarchy."
- Claims that advertising has no effect don't fool the advertisers**
- "The cigarette industry has been artfully maintaining that cigarette advertising has nothing to do with total sales. This is complete and utter nonsense. The industry knows it is nonsense. I am always amused by the suggestion that advertising, a function that has been shown to increase consumption of virtually every other product, somehow miraculously fails to work for tobacco products." (Advertising Executive Emerson Foote, former Chairman of the Board of McCann-Erickson, which handled \$20 million in tobacco accounts)
- "Cigarette people maintain peer pressure is the culprit in getting kids to start smoking and advertising has little effect. That's like saying cosmetic ads have no effect on girls too young to put on lipstick." (Rance Crain, Editor-in-Chief, *Advertising Age*, 1995)

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7. L. Heise, Unhealthy Alliance, *World Watch*, 1988, October, p20
8. R.Crain, *Advertising Age*, 1995, 30 October

3. Why Formula One is effective tobacco advertising

- Section 1. The tobacco companies are inevitably in competition for young smokers despite their denials.
- Section 2. Tobacco advertising increases consumption and is used to sell the product to teenagers
- **This section. Sponsorship of motorsport is a particularly effective form of tobacco advertising for the key youth market**

- Section 4. Sponsorship of motorsport may also be used to counter the sports-driven desire to quit smoking among older teenagers.

The extracts below show how motor sport has been positioned as one of the most effective forms of tobacco advertising of all time - the natural successor to the Marlboro Cowboy. A direct appeal to the young.

<i>A link with sport is important - maybe as much as look and taste</i>	Imperial Tobacco (Canada) outlines: "the association of a brand with certain advertising campaigns or sport or cultural activities"... (and) may be as important as the physical characteristics of the cigarette in satisfying consumer needs."
<i>What does Formula One mean? - courage, virility and good value</i>	Marlboro's Aleardo Buzzi: "We are the Number One brand in the world. What we wanted was to promote a particular image of adventure, courage, of virility." Brian Wray, from John Player adds: "Its expensive, but we've examined it closely and decided its good value."
<i>Glamour plus global reach - exactly what tobacco is after</i>	Barrie Gill, Chief Executive of Championship Sports Specialists Ltd, a sports sponsorship company, explains why tobacco companies are so interested in motor racing: "It's the ideal sport for sponsorship. It's got glamour and world wide television coverage. It's a ten month activity involving sixteen races in fourteen countries with drivers from sixteen nationalities. After football it's the Number One multinational sport. It's got total global exposure, total global hospitality, total media coverage and 600 million people watching it on TV every fortnight ...It's macho, it's excitement, it's colour, it's international, it's glamour.... They're there to get visibility. They're there to sell cigarettes."