

Tobacco industry may be using YouTube to market its products

August 25 2010

Tobacco companies may be using web 2.0 media, such as YouTube, to market their products to young people, so getting round marketing restrictions for tobacco content in place elsewhere, suggests research published online in *Tobacco Control*.

Tobacco companies have always vehemently denied advertising on the Internet. Several of them signed up to a voluntary agreement to restrict direct advertising on websites by the end of 2002.

The authors targeted [YouTube](#), because it has the largest [market share](#) of the online video [market](#), and searched through the first 20 pages of video clips containing any reference to five tobacco brands.

These were Marlboro and L&M, marketed by Philip Morris; Benson and Hedges, marketed by both British American Tobacco and Gallager; and Winston and Mild Seven, marketed by Japan Tobacco and Reynolds.

Marlboro, L&M, Winston and Mild Seven are the top four brands by world sales.

The authors analysed 163 relevant clips in all, over 20 of which appeared to be "very professionally made," they say.

The clips included the 40 most viewed for Marlboro, Winston cigarettes, and Benson and Hedges; 24 English language videos for Mild Seven; and 19 for L&M cigarettes.

Those videos associated with Marlboro were the most heavily viewed, totting up an average of almost 104,000 views each, with one attracting 2 million views alone.

Almost three quarters of the content found (71%) was classified as "pro-tobacco," with less than 4% classified as "anti-tobacco."

Most (70%) of the sample clips contained brand images of people smoking branded tobacco products, and most video clips for every brand studied, except Marlboro, contained brand content or the brand name in the title.

Out of 40 Marlboro videos, 39 had the name Marlboro in the title. Thirty three appeared to be related to the brand— for example, containing images of a man on a horse or the Marlboro advertisement theme, say the authors.

Archive material, celebrities/movies, sports, and music were the most common content themes in the 163 clips. These are likely to appeal to young people, say the authors.

Almost one in three (30%) of the Marlboro video clips studied featured music, and one in four (25%) featured celebrities/movies. Around half of Mild Seven (54%) and Benson and Hedges (45%) had a sports theme.

"The arguments used to limit tobacco imagery in film and TV appear to apply to internet videos," say the authors.

And they conclude: "Policy development by governments and/or the [World Health Organization] is needed to encourage or require website operators to add pro-tobacco imagery or brand content to the material they will remove, so as to reduce youth exposure to such material."

Provided by British Medical Journal

Citation: Tobacco industry may be using YouTube to market its products (2010, August 25)
retrieved 19 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2010-08-tobacco-industry-youtube-products.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.