Fact Sheet: Selling an "Extra Something"
How Industry Advertising Created and Sustains Menthol Cigarette Use Among Youth, Women, & Black Americans

Key Findings
The tobacco industry has orchestrated nearly a century of

(1) deceptive menthol marketing campaigns targeting Black people, women and youth, resulting in high rates of menthol tobacco use, addiction and premature death among these populations.

(2) developing ways to circumvent legislative and regulatory menthol tobacco sale restrictions such as:
   • new products that add menthol to unflavored cigarettes as well as
   • menthol tobacco products that are regulated differently from cigarettes, such as chewing tobacco, e-cigarettes, cigarillos, snus and hookah.

A long history of industry targeting
The study is the result of exhaustive research of tobacco industry marketing and internal corporate correspondence since the 1930s, including company advertisements targeting specific consumer segments by skin color, gender and age over the course of decades. The study also includes excerpts from numerous internal company documents reflecting the industry’s sophisticated marketing approaches in areas.

The fact that blacks, young people and women, who have in common the fact that they are light smokers, all tend to like menthols, reinforces the concept that menthol provides an "extra something."

Source: Roper Org Inc. A Study of Smokers’ Habits and Attitudes with Special Emphasis on Low Tar and Menthol Cigarettes Volume I. 1979
March. Philip Morris (https://www.industrydocuments.ucsf.edu/docs/jrg0189)

Obfuscating the harms of smoking
For much of the last century, tobacco companies attempted to reassure a public increasingly worried about the health consequences of smoking through marketing campaigns with claims such as “More Doctors Smoke Camels,” and “Got a cold? Smoke a Kool.” Today, menthol tobacco advertising continues to include health reassurance messaging with the use of proxy terms such as “natural” and “organic” tobacco.
Aggressive Ads in Black Communities

The report examines tobacco industry efforts to sell more menthol products within Black communities by deluging urban centers with menthol cigarette advertisements on billboards, buses and subways, distributing free “starter packs” and discount coupons, and featuring prominent Black athletes and entertainers in menthol advertisements in leading Black newspapers and magazines.

Case Examples

Newport employees handing out samples in predominately Black communities from a Newport van were instructed to

“Assertively ask people to accept samples of Newports” to “provide aggressive promotional and advertising support for the brand.”

A 1981 RJ Reynolds corporate document stated that “the Black segment has been identified as the Brand’s Special Market priority” for its Salem brand.

As a result of this aggressive advertising

85% of Black people who smoke use menthol cigarettes and

90% of Black teens who smoke use menthol cigarettes.

Seizing on popularity among women

When tobacco companies discovered that women were early adopters of menthol brands, they responded with marketing campaigns designed to appeal to women through feminine product designs, feminine names and slogans.

As a result of this aggressive advertising

44% of women who smoke use menthol cigarettes.

Case Examples

The Eve brand, launched in 1971 intentionally chose both a “feminine package design” and a “truly female name,” according to industry documents.

Philip Morris Executive Larry Williams indicated that the name Virginia Slims, launched in 1968, was chosen because “most women like to think of themselves as slim.”

Print ads were prominently displayed in women’s magazines alongside catchy slogans:

• **Lady, Be Cool** (Kool)
• **For More of a Woman** (Salem)
• **Light and Luscious** (Camel)
Luring Youth to Start with Menthol

The report examines documents revealing a consistent focus on attracting youthful smokers since the 1920s, including using acronyms referring to the targets of their youth-oriented advertising campaigns:

- YAS, Young Adult Smokers
- FUBYAS, First Usual Brand Younger Adult Smokers

The patently youth-targeted “Alive with Pleasure” campaign established Newport as a dominant youth starter brand, the number one best-selling menthol brand, and the second best-selling cigarette.

A primary market for Newport cigarettes was young African Americans. The 1992 brand plan revealed targeting “primarily to young ethnic adult smokers ages 18-24,” and “the ethnic market could be a major source of new business for the brand that we plan to exploit.”

As a result of this predatory targeting, more than half of teens who begin smoking start with a menthol brand.

Music festival sponsorships attract new users

Starting with the Newport Jazz Festival in the 1950s, to the Salem Spirit Concert Series in the 1980s, to tobacco-sponsored concert series today including Kool MIXX, Marlboro’s Vinyl Vibes and Salem’s Stir the Senses, tobacco companies continue to recruit new users across populations through music events.

The Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act prohibited music and art event sponsorships by cigarette and oral tobacco brands, but not by cigars or emerging nicotine products such as e-cigarettes and heated tobacco.