

STUDENT HANDOUT: AN INSIDE LOOK INTO A MARKETING CAMPAIGN

R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co. had a campaign plan for a new cigarette brand, "Dakota." This plan was obtained and leaked by the *Washington Post* in February 1990. The campaign targeted young, poorly educated white women, so-called "virile females." The company identified these women as having no education beyond high school, and as enjoying "cruising," "partying" and attending "Hot Rod shows" and "tractor pulls" with their boyfriends. The campaign envisioned their favourite television roles as "evening soap opera bitches" and their chief aspiration as getting married in their early twenties. The "virile female" was described as spending her free time "with her boyfriend doing whatever he is doing."

When this campaign plan was leaked by the press, R.J. Reynolds denied that Dakota was aimed solely at women and expressed concern that the plans "represent stolen, proprietary information belonging to R.J. Reynolds, and . . . would be of great value to our competitors."

The Dakota disclosure came just three weeks after R.J. Reynolds was forced, by strong opposition, to cancel plans to test-market "Uptown," a brand of cigarettes aimed at African Americans.

A few years later, more leaked documents showed that R.J. Reynolds, undaunted by the earlier embarrassments, was also targeting youth. A 1997 marketing memorandum stamped "RJR Secret" stated that "to ensure increased and longer term growth of Camel Filter, the brand must increase its share of penetration among the 14–24 age group which have a new set of liberal values and which represent tomorrow's cigarette business."

R.J. Reynolds made this public statement in 1994:

". . . that smoking is a choice for adults and that marketing programs are directed at those above the age to smoke."

Stats and figures³

- R.J. Reynolds launched the Joe Camel campaign, featuring a cartoon camel in 1988. Since the campaign began, Camel's share of the underage smoking market increased from 0.5% to 32.8%.

In 1991, *JAMA: The Journal of the American Medical Association* found that Joe Camel cartoons more successfully reach children than adults: 93.6% of high school students identified Joe Camel as compared to 57.7% of adults. In another 1991 study, 91.3% of 6-year-old American children could identify Joe Camel, approximately the same as the number who recognize Mickey Mouse.

³ <http://www.apha.org/policies-and-advocacy/public-health-policy-statements/policy-database/2014/07/29/10/58/advertising-and-promotion-of-alcohol-and-tobacco-products-to-youth>