



## Marketing tobacco to New Zealand women: 8 ways to reflect on “World No Tobacco Day”

**Background**—This year’s “World No Tobacco Day” on 31 May 2010 (“World Smokefree Day” in New Zealand) focuses on how tobacco is marketed to women.<sup>1</sup> This topic is particularly relevant given the current inquiry by the Māori Affairs Select Committee into tobacco issues<sup>2</sup> and the very high smoking prevalence among Māori women.<sup>3</sup>

Prior to middle age, the health consequences of women smoking are more serious than those caused by male smokers. This is because of the impacts of smoking in pregnancy to the fetus (e.g., perinatal mortality, low birth weight, preterm delivery etc)<sup>4</sup> and the effects of exposing infants and children to second-hand smoke (e.g., sudden infant death syndrome and asthma). Such impacts are experienced disproportionately by Māori.

Evidence from the United States reveals tobacco companies have a long history of marketing to women and brands such as Virginia Slims, Eve, Satin, Capri, and Misty were specifically designed to appeal to women.<sup>5</sup> Overt targeting of women led the US Surgeon General to conclude that “tobacco industry marketing is a factor influencing susceptibility to and initiation of smoking among girls”.<sup>4</sup>

Evidence that tobacco companies have systematically and successfully recruited female smokers has prompted us to investigate tobacco marketing to girls and women in New Zealand, an area that has previously been analysed only very briefly.<sup>6</sup>

**Methods**—We searched for relevant New Zealand literature (Medline) and survey data (e.g., the Ministry of Health website). We also analysed mentholated tobacco use data from the ITC Project survey. This is a national survey of 1376 New Zealand adult (18+ years) smokers surveyed between March 2007 and February 2008. Wave two in the subsequent 12 months involved 923 respondents. Further detail on the survey methods are available in an online *Methods Report*<sup>7</sup> and in publications.<sup>8,9</sup>

In addition we re-examined a collection of discarded cigarette packs obtained for other research purposes (with the methodology detailed elsewhere<sup>10,11</sup>). Further contextual data came from a search of tobacco products for sale via online retail websites,<sup>12,13</sup> and hand searching imported magazines held in Wellington Central Library (May 2010). We used a variant of the “five Ps” of marketing as employed by British American Tobacco in the UK (i.e., product, price, place, promotion and packaging)<sup>14</sup> to consider how tobacco companies’ marketing might reach New Zealand women.

**Results and Discussion**—In total, we identified at least eight mechanisms used to market tobacco products to New Zealand women (see Table 1). These covered four of the “five Ps” of marketing in the framework used (i.e., not particularly “place”). Given the advertising and sponsorship restrictions contained in the Smoke-free Environments Act 1990 (SFEA), persistent marketing represents “policy incoherence” that we have previously discussed.<sup>15</sup>

We document practices that we believe contravene at least the spirit of the SFEA and suggest how these might be addressed (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Likely mechanisms for marketing of tobacco products to women in New Zealand**

Marketing mechanism	Detail	Possible solutions
Promotion – retail marketing	Retailers throughout NZ continue to display both “unisex” and female-oriented brands in their shops (see Figure 1 for an example). Tobacco products targeted at women are also promoted on NZ-based websites (e.g., the female-oriented brand “Cameo Mild” <sup>12</sup> ).	NZ could follow international best practice and ban point-of-sale tobacco displays (currently under consideration in NZ <sup>16</sup> ). See also below for introducing standardised plain packaging.
Promotion – magazine advertising	Fashion magazines imported into NZ contain tobacco advertising directed at women e.g., advertisements in <i>Vogue</i> magazine (US edition) depict a woman smoking “Davidoff Slims” (a brand available in NZ). Various unisex brand advertisements include white coloured packs (e.g., “Dunhill fine cut” in <i>Interview</i> magazine) and have “lights” descriptors that may be more attractive to women (see below). Even imported non-fashion magazines (e.g., <i>Entertainment Weekly</i> ) contain advertisements that show women smoking.	The NZ Government could promote standardised plain packaging internationally e.g., via the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.
Packaging – brand names	“Vogue Bleue” has recently become available in NZ. This name is likely to appeal to women, particularly given its link with the major women’s fashion magazine, <i>Vogue</i> . The pack design and cigarette shape (see below) is consistent with a female audience (see Figure 1). Other brand names on sale in NZ currently that are likely to have been designed to appeal to female market segments include: “Topaz”, “Dunhill Essence” and “Cameo” (see details below).	The NZ Government could adopt standardised plain packaging as planned for Australia <sup>17</sup> where brand names will be displayed using a small standard font. Ideally this would be combined with larger pictorial health warnings.
Packaging – light and mild descriptors and associated pack colouring	Our ITC Project (wave 1) found higher reported use of “lights” among women compared to men (27.2% vs 18.5%). <sup>18</sup> This pattern is consistent with international data. <sup>19 20</sup> The marketing of “lights” continues in NZ using words such as “subtle” and “mellow” and colour coding of packs, such as blue colouring for former brands of “lights”. <sup>10</sup> Furthermore, in some NZ settings the words “light” and “mild” continue to be used (e.g., the Woolworths website <sup>12</sup> as of May 2010), which is counter to the ruling by the Commerce Commission in 2008. <sup>21</sup> As has been well-documented, the terms “light” and “mild” deceptively suggest particular brands or variants are less harmful, and so may inhibit cessation attempts by appearing to provide less harmful alternatives to regular variants. <sup>18</sup>	As above for standardised plain packaging (for which there are strong public health arguments <sup>22</sup> ).
Packaging – pack design & colouring	As well as the brand names used, other elements of package design are likely to appeal to women. For example, the purple colours used on the “Vogue Bleue” pack (Figure 1) may have female connotations and purple is the predominant colour on the front of “Topaz” packs. The elegant pack design of “Davidoff Slims” (a tall thin octagonal shaped pack), and the packs of “Dunhill Essence” (atypically small in size and white/or dark red colouring) are also likely to appeal to women. The “Cameo” brand includes a cameo broach type image of a female head silhouette and associated wording	As above for standardised plain packaging.

Marketing mechanism	Detail	Possible solutions
	“satin tipped”. Although pink coloured packs are used elsewhere for marketing tobacco to women, <sup>23</sup> we did not identify these colours in our pack collection.	
Product – “menthols”	Our new analysis of ITC Project data (wave 1) indicated higher prevalence of menthol use (mentholated factory-made cigarettes and RYO tobacco) among women compared to men (20.0% vs 5.0%, odds ratio = 4.74, 95% confidence interval = 2.71 – 8.32). Furthermore, we found that menthol smokers were significantly more likely than other smokers to believe that menthol cigarettes are less harmful than regular cigarettes (wave 2 data). This is a misperception, given that the data generally indicates that menthols are at least as dangerous as their non-mentholated counterparts. <sup>24</sup> The marketing of menthols may therefore work in a similar way to “lights” by providing an alternative to quitting for health conscious (mainly women) smokers.	The NZ Government could consider banning all additives to tobacco products on precautionary health grounds (including menthol but also sugars, flavours etc).
Product – cigarette design	The extra thin cigarettes in brands such as “Vogue Bleue” (Figure 1), “Davidoff Slims” (see an online advertisement <sup>25</sup> ), and “Dunhill Essence” (which has the word “superslims” on the side), are likely to appeal to women concerned about their weight or health, or who see these brands as associated with “elegance” (a claim implied in “Davidoff Slims” advertisements featured in <i>Vogue</i> magazine).	Regulations could set standardised cigarette characteristics (to go with standardised plain packaging).
Price – RYO & price discounts	NZ women have significantly lower average incomes than men <sup>26</sup> and thus may be more attracted to lower priced tobacco and to price discounts. Indeed, women who smoke roll-your-own (RYO) are more likely to cite price as a reason for their choice than men (76.8% vs 72.9%), <sup>27</sup> though the overall prevalence of RYO use is similar to that for men. <sup>28</sup> This pattern of a significantly higher price reason by women was also evident in our Wave 1 ITC Project data for RYO usage reasons [unpublished data].	Minimum pricing could be established (an approach some countries have taken with alcohol – as detailed in a recent NZ Law Commission Report <sup>29</sup> ).
<i>Unclear marketing mechanisms (potentially require further research)</i>		
Promotion – via product placement?	Product placement of branded tobacco products in movies has been documented. <sup>30</sup> Some of the brands shown in internationally popular movies <sup>30 31</sup> are also available on the NZ market and some could be considered to be either unisex brands or have relatively high female appeal (e.g., light variants of “Marlboro”). More generally, the occurrence of smoking in movies and television is problematic, given that it is common (including for NZ <sup>32 33</sup> ) and because it is a risk factor for smoking in youth. There is even NZ data indicating that viewing R-rated films is associated with current smoking by adolescents <sup>34</sup> and for television viewing in childhood and adolescence and subsequent adult smoking. <sup>35</sup>	Assigning a high “R” rating to movies that contain smoking has been proposed as an intervention. <sup>36</sup>
Promotion – internet?	Some promotion of smoking by women on the internet is quite overt (e.g., this online advertisement: <sup>25</sup> ). Also several authors have provided evidence for tobacco marketing to youth that occurs on the internet. <sup>37-39</sup> Of note is the potential difficulty in determining if associations are unintentional or contrived e.g., the YouTube video called “Vogue” with the pop diva Madonna and some smoking content visible, <sup>40</sup> and the international availability of the “Vogue” cigarette brand (Figure 1). Nevertheless, we lack detailed data on the promotion of NZ-available brands in various internet domains (besides NZ online shopping sites <sup>12 13</sup> ).	The NZ Government could promote standardised plain packaging internationally e.g., via the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

**Figure 1. Packet of “Vogue Bleu” with extra thin cigarettes purchased in a New Zealand dairy (May 2010)**



**Conclusions**—This brief analysis identified at least eight mechanisms used to market tobacco to New Zealand women. The persistence of marketing despite the current law (SFEA) is a major concern, given the size of the tobacco epidemic in New Zealand, the particular harm being done to Māori women, and the harm to fetuses, infants and children. We favour a rapid endgame solution to the tobacco epidemic, involving a sinking lid on sales, and progressing to a complete end of sales in 10 years.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, while such a solution is in progress, it is also appropriate for government to consider the specific measures outlined in the Table above, as the evidence suggests these will ameliorate the harms caused by tobacco marketing.

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