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Tobacco industry targeting youth in Argentina

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Abstract

Background/aim—Argentina has one of the highest cigarette smoking rates among both men and women in the Americas and no legislated restrictions on tobacco industry advertising. The tobacco industry has traditionally expanded markets by targeting adolescents and young adults. The objective of this study was to determine whether and how the tobacco industry promotes cigarettes to adolescents in Argentina.

Methods—We conducted a systematic search of tobacco industry documents available through the internet dated between 1995 and 2004 using standard search terms to identify marketing strategies in Argentina. A selected review of the four leading newspapers and nine magazines with reported high readership among adolescents was completed. The selected print media were searched for tobacco images and these were classified as advertisements if associated with a commercial product or as a story if not.

Results—The tobacco industry used market segmentation as a strategy to target Argentinean consumers. British American Tobacco (BAT) undertook a young adult psychographic study and classified them as “progressives”, “Jurassics” or “conservatives” and “crudos” or “spoiled brats”. BAT marketed Lucky Strike to the “progressives” using Hollywood movies as a vehicle. The tobacco industry also targeted their national brands to the conservatives and linked these brands with “nationalistic values” in advertising campaigns. Philip Morris promoted Marlboro by sponsoring activities directed at young people and they launched the 10 cigarettes packet as a starter vehicle.

Conclusions—The tobacco industry used psychographic segmentation of the population and developed advertising strategies focused on youth. Tobacco control researchers and advocates must be able to address these strategies in counter-marketing interventions.

In 2006, according to a report from the Argentinean Ministry of Health and Environment, 33.4% of the population aged 18–64 years had smoked cigarettes in the previous 12 months, with high rates among both men and women.¹² The average age of smoking initiation was 12.7 years with marginal differences in gender, and by the end of high school 42% of all students reported being current smokers.^{3–6}

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Argentina produces nearly 2% of the world's tobacco leaf grown in the northern provinces of Jujuy, Salta, Catamarca, Chaco, Misiones and Corrientes. In 2004, 77 597 hectares were cultivated with tobacco producing a total of 157 400 tons of tobacco leaf and 70% of them were exported to the neighbouring countries for a total value of \$US191 million.⁷ The two companies that dominate the tobacco market in Argentina are subsidiaries of trans-national companies (table 1). Massalin-Particulares SA, a subsidiary of Philip Morris, is responsible for almost 60% of all cigarette sales and their primary brands are Marlboro, Particulares and Virginia Slims. The other consortium is Nobleza-Piccardo, a subsidiary of BAT, which produces the cigarette brands Jockey Club, Derby, Camel (licensed by RJ Reynolds) and Parisiennes, controlling almost 40% of the market.⁸

The tobacco industry considers Argentina to be a market in expansion and has developed intense and effective marketing campaigns.^{9,10} Total cigarettes sales rose 19.5% between 1990 and 2004.¹¹ Marketing effectively reaches adolescents evidenced by the fact that 90% of those aged between 14 and 17 years had seen tobacco advertisements in a public setting in the 30 days before a 2002 survey conducted in Buenos Aires.¹² The investment in marketing and advertising for the year 2002 reached about 74.5 million Argentinean pesos (\$25 million).¹³

Market segmentation is the process of dividing potential consumers into distinct groups who are likely to respond favourably to different product or service offerings. There are different strategies for segmenting consumer markets: demographic, perceived benefits, expected behaviour, loyalty status, lifestyle and psychographic categories of potential consumers. Psychographic segmentation attempts to cluster customers into groups depending upon lifestyle, common interests and social attitudes which will determine the way they spend their time and money.¹⁴ Market segmentation has been a very effective and efficient strategy used for years by the tobacco industries.^{15–18} Although tobacco advertising strategies targeting adolescents have been documented in several countries,^{15,19–27} little is known about tobacco marketing strategies targeting this group in Argentina. Trans-national tobacco companies have tried to apply marketing strategies developed abroad on a global basis followed by regional and country-specific strategies.²⁸ The objective of this study was to analyse tobacco industry documents to determine how tobacco companies developed advertising strategies targeted at adolescents and young adults from 1990 to 2004 in Argentina.

METHODS

Tobacco industry documents

Between June 2004 and October 2005, we searched tobacco industry documents in the Legacy Tobacco Documents Library at the University of California San Francisco (<http://legacy.library.ucsf.edu/>), the BAT Documents Archive (<http://www.bat.library.ucsf.edu>) and Tobacco Documents Online (www.tobaccodocuments.org). We also searched the internet websites of Philip Morris (www.pmdocs.com) and Nobleza-Piccardo (www.noblezopiccardo.com.ar).

Initial search terms were “Argentina” combined with “marketing strategies”, “marketing”, “advertising”, “advertisement”, “young” and “young adult”. We also used industry acronyms such as “YAUS” (young adult urban smoker), and cigarette brand names such as “Marlboro”, “Philip Morris”, “Viceroy”, “Jockey Club” and “Camel”. We conducted additional snowball searches on names, places, topics, Bates numbers and campaign names. We identified over 1500 possible documents containing these search terms, and this analysis was based upon a final collection of 327 documents that specifically related to market research, advertising campaigns, market segmentation, consumer studies and promotional

activities in Argentina. Each document was reviewed by SB and classified into one of the following topics: market segmentation, youth, premium cigarettes or light cigarettes.

Tobacco content analyses of print media

We matched advertising images with the campaigns described in the documents²⁹ using our own collection of print advertising obtained for a report prepared for the Ministry of Health.³⁰ We developed a descriptive, serial method to evaluate the content and extent of tobacco images and tobacco-focused articles published in Argentinean newspapers and magazines. The four leading daily newspapers (*Clarín*, *La Nación*, *Crónica*, *Página 12*) and seven popular magazines (*Noticias*, *Revista XXIII*, *Gente*, *Caras*, *Rolling Stone*, *El Gráfico* and *Tres Puntos*) with the leading national circulation in Argentina between 1995 and 2004 were reviewed. We obtained a sample of 4828 newspapers and 1042 magazines. The newspaper sample included all issues during April, June, August and September during each of the 10 years. The selected magazines reported that at least 50% of their readership was 25 years of age or younger and *Rolling Stone* was the only international publication included. All magazine issues in the designated years were obtained.

Using methods similar to those used in previous print media content analyses, tobacco images identified in both articles and advertisements were classified as an “advertisement” if associated with a visible commercial product brand or as a “story” or “non-advertisement image” when the tobacco image was not associated with a specific identifiable brand product.^{31,32} Three coding instruments were developed to analyse tobacco advertising images, tobacco images unrelated to advertising and tobacco articles, respectively. The code instrument developed to analyse ad images examined content and format variables. Content variables included brand, type of tobacco (lights or full flavour), presence of pack images, illustrations or gender of models used, landscape images or associated events such as sports, social, political and arts. The second category focused on length, location, page number, day of week and section of how images and articles were delivered. All material was obtained and coded independently by a team of six reviewers who had been previously trained and the inter-rater reliability was high ($\kappa = 0.84$). Advertising campaigns that were discussed in the tobacco industry documents were specifically reviewed.

The printed advertisements served as verification that marketing plans discussed in the documents were carried out, and provided illustrations of how the advertising themes were executed in Argentina. The documents and brands discussed were selected to present examples of a cross-section of the strategies used in Argentina by the major tobacco companies.

RESULTS

Over the past 25 years, the Argentinean market has been contested between two companies, Massalin-Particulares (Philip Morris) and Nobleza Piccardo (BAT). Nobleza Piccardo was the market leader during the 1980s, but in the 1990s BAT and Philip Morris independently decided to increase country coverage in Argentina. To accomplish these objectives, BAT and Philip Morris performed market segmentation studies of Argentinean consumers, and established segments according to age and psychographics of the consumers, and also used other characteristics such as price or flavour of the cigarettes.^{33–35}

Tobacco industry general strategies

Philip Morris developed publicity campaigns for Marlboro in order to be a “leader brand in volume and image and the youngest brand in profile”.³⁶ In 1992, Philip Morris and its lead brand, Marlboro, captured the market leadership from BAT for the first time and has since

consolidated this market position.³⁷ Later, in 1994, BAT gained the rights to Lucky Strike in the United States and selected it as “a weapon against Philip Morris and Marlboro”.³⁸ The strategy developed for Lucky Strike was to highlight a liberal lifestyle and individual freedom as core values for this brand. “Lucky Strike’s strong, masculine traditional American image imbues the brand with an aura of independence, self-confidence, freedom and adventure”.^{39,40} This strategy was very successful and “had a significant impact on the market”.⁴¹ In 1995, U Herter, manager director of BAT Industries, defined the enterprise mission of “becoming the number one tobacco company in Argentina and to overtake Philip Morris in ten years”.⁹

The European market research organisation, ERC Statistics International,⁴² conducted studies of tobacco consumption in different countries,^{43–45} and developed in 1996 a document entitled “Argentine overview” for Brown & Williamson. In this document they estimated that in 1995, 29% of Argentinean adults smoked. Unlike many other countries where the age of legal adulthood is set at 18, however, they considered an “adult smoker every person older than 15 years.”³⁷ This suggests that similar to strategies used in the United States,^{25,46,47} the tobacco industry in Argentina referred to their marketing campaigns targeting youth as campaigns for “young adults” or “younger adults.”

Psychographic segmentation and marketing

BAT appeared to utilise a psychographic segmentation strategy to develop its marketing targets in Argentina. Psychographic segmentation studies focus on the lifestyle and values of the target rather than solely the demographic characteristics, which facilitates developing marketing campaigns that appeal to both youth and young adults. Under the name “YAUS (Young Adult Urban Smoker) Project” BAT developed a worldwide segmentation strategy with the aim of measuring consumer attitudes and motivation, current brand franchises and regional similarities and differences. They decided to start the segmentation studies in South America in 1995, rolled them out in 1996, and extended them to the rest of the world in 1997.⁴⁸ In 1995, BAT developed the Consumer Classification Matrix of YAUS.⁹ This psychographic study of Argentinean young adults classified them in different segments. The segmentation scheme seemed to be based on political and religious attitudes, with “progressives” being agnostic, liberal and anti-US in politics; “jurassics” or conservatives being religious and pro-US, and “crudos” or “spoiled brats” being uninvolved in religious or political issues.

BAT selected Lucky Strike for the “progressives group” and developed a promotional campaign, “Get Lucky” with the objective “to challenge the dominant strength of Marlboro” using “luck and humour” to portray the brand’s heritage.³⁸ This campaign was based on previous qualitative research conducted in Argentina in 1994 and finding that the campaign clearly transmitted “the brand’s core values as humorous, unique, nonconformist, American and, in addition, the campaign was very appealing to Marlboro smokers.”⁴⁹ “Get Lucky was perceived as more Creative, Original, Imaginative, Fun loving and Intelligent than Marlboro”.⁵⁰ Although the “Get Lucky” campaign transmitted Americanism as a “core value,” BAT selected Lucky Strike for the “progressives” segment (politically opposed to US policies) because previous research had shown that the Marlboro campaign was perceived as even more American than the Lucky Strike campaign.⁵⁰

The campaign underwent testing in Spain, Indonesia and Argentina. In Argentina, the campaign included Hollywood movie themes, such as *Die Hard*, *The Fugitive* and *Under Suspicion* that were selected to reinforce the brand’s core value. One of the stated requirements BAT had for the campaign was that it have “the ability to make Marlboro-Cowboy/Marlboro Country themes look outdated”.⁵¹ Similar to Philip Morris, BAT developed other brand support activities targeted to this segment. For example, as

sponsorship of the Motorcycle Suzuki Team, they generated a significant amount of “free media” value for Lucky Strike during the Argentinean leg of the Motorcycle Grand Prix World Championship, by arranging a meeting between their champion, Kevin Schwantz and President Menem.^{52,53} In the content analysis of magazines we found the Lucky Strike brand was the most advertised in *Rolling Stone*, an international magazine which is well known for targeting at the progressives segment.³⁰

Contrary to the humorous messages of Lucky Strike advertising, campaign promotional strategies tailored to the “conservatives” focused on the promotion of Argentinean “national values”. Because BAT had found that its international brands could not reach smokers with strong national identity,⁴⁰ marketing strategies developed for the conservative segment linked “national values” with BAT national brands: Derby and Jockey Club. These two brands were successfully positioned on values such as family, friendship, father/son relationship, sharing and patriotism or love of country. In order to reflect these values BAT used emotional language to reinforce “national values” message in all Jockey Club and Derby advertisements.⁵⁴⁻⁵⁶ Consistent with this strategy, the best-known slogan used in Jockey Club advertisement was “Compañero de Emociones” (Emotional Companion), which was developed to show Jockey Club as the national brand that shares the emotions and values of the Argentine consumers.⁴⁰

Tobacco images in print media

In our search for tobacco images, we found a good example of this strategy in Derby’s 1999 campaign.³⁰ BAT turned to love of country, taking advantage of the 200-year-old conflict between Argentina and the United Kingdom over the Falkland Islands (Malvinas in Argentina), by prominently featuring the anniversary of the 1982 “Islas Malvinas War” in advertising for the BAT Derby brand. Derby designed a campaign with photographs taken in the Falkland Islands and the tagline of the smoker stating “*es desde estas islas donde quería ver el mar*” (it is from these islands that I wanted to see the sea) (Fig 3). This type of advertisement expressed the nationalistic pride of the “conservative” segment regarding ownership of the territory occupied by the British.⁵⁷ We were not able to find any BAT strategies targeted at “crudos”. This may be because this was the smallest segment representing only 11% of Argentinean youth, and the most popular brand among them was Marlboro (a Philip Morris brand).⁹

In the mid 1990s, Marlboro became the most popular cigarette brand, with 53% of men smokers and 47% of women smokers. Almost 50% of smokers younger than 25 years of age smoked Marlboro, most of them (90%) from middle and lower socioeconomic classes.⁴⁴ Marlboro was the starter brand in 45% and the 10-cigarette packet of Marlboro was considered “the best trial and initiation vehicle for the brand”.³⁶ Marlboro reached first place in sales through the increased use of advertising campaigns and sponsored activities directed at “young adults”.⁵⁸ These campaigns included the promotion of “(activities)” associated with top world sports such as “*enduro*” (cross-country motorcycle racing) and kite buggy races (a kite buggy is a light, purpose-built vehicle powered by wind). In addition, Philip Morris promoted activities that emphasised peer-group activities popular among young people, like free tickets to rock festivals or selected movies, and other activities that communicated independence, freedom and peer acceptance. One example was use of a truck with the Marlboro logo visiting the most popular summer vacation resorts with famous singers or models in the truck as they organised party type activities at the beach. In addition, in newspapers and magazines Marlboro was the most advertised brand and the most identifiable logo in non-advertisement sports images during 1995–2004 (see Fig 4).³⁰

The role of “premium” brands

Most of the youth brands were also regarded as premium cigarettes. The premium segment was a priority for the tobacco industry in the 1990s when the exchange rate between the Argentinean peso and the US dollar was kept at one-to-one, allowing the importation of foreign brands at the same price as the national brands.³³ In Argentina, premium brands were Marlboro, Lucky Strike, Parliament, Camel, B&H and Virginia Slims.

BAT considered that all brands with a price equal to or greater than that of Marlboro were “premium brands”. In 1990, BAT designed a regional campaign for Latin America³⁴ and pushed high price international brands (USIB: US International Brands) such as Camel and Lucky Strike, which had been taken out of the market during the 1980s.⁵⁹⁶⁰ Premium brands were the most profitable segment of the market and were a priority for tobacco industry marketing departments. These cigarettes were directed to young people because “The consumer profile of premium cigarettes is biased towards ASU 30 (Adult smokers under 30 years old); particularly in developing markets. There is also a bias towards the higher social classes”.⁶¹ These function as “stylish” brands, for people who want to project an image of sophistication and class.⁶² Sponsorship of elite oriented sports like polo or boat races was also used to promote the association between smoking and success among the working and middleclass population.

The “light” segment

In 1990 BAT created a low price “light” cigarette targeted at “male and female, 18–20 years old, middle-income groups”. The target group characteristics were “Modern, contemporary, upwardly mobile, open to new smoking propositions, fashion aware, educated, within the market’s parameters, seeking internationalism, health conscious, caring, trusting, emotion driven people, influenced by the group pressure, market pressure towards low calorie, low alcohol, low fat...”.⁶³ In Argentina, smokers of “light” cigarettes belonged to a middle-high income level, mostly were women and older than full flavour smokers.³⁵ According to a BAT report the “light segment” grew 3.8% per year from 1990 to 1995. The most consumed lights brands in Argentina in 1995 were Jockey Club Suaves, Le Mans Suaves, Derby Suaves, Parliament, and Marlboro Lights; these are line extensions of full-flavour brands. Twenty-nine per cent of the Argentinean market smoked these cigarettes, and Argentina, with a population of only 38 million, occupies the eighth place in the world market of light cigarettes.³⁵⁶⁴

DISCUSSION

Our analysis of the tobacco industry documents confirms that both Philip Morris and BAT studied “young adults” attitudes, lifestyles, values, and aspirations in order to develop cigarette-advertising campaigns targeted at different psychographic segments of the population in Argentina. These psychographic segments were different from those applied in other countries such as Canada and the United States,¹⁵⁴⁶ and the campaigns were designed to target the psychosocial needs of segments specific to Argentina. The tobacco companies incorporated local culture, beliefs and attitudes in their campaigns using established social marketing methods. BAT promoted a liberal lifestyle and individual freedom in their messages for the politically progressive market segments and nationalism and family values for the conservative group. The BAT tobacco marketers tailored cigarette advertising by capitalising on the political conflict associated with the Falklands and associating their brand with Argentine nationalism even though the conflict was with the United Kingdom.

The tobacco industry has stated that it does not want to sell cigarettes to minors, but the fact remains that most current smokers started smoking before the age of 19 years. However,

other studies have shown that cigarette manufacturers try to recruit new smokers and in Argentina there was intense competition between Philip Morris and BAT to capture and maintain the youth cigarette market.¹⁵⁴⁶⁶⁵ Similarly, we found tobacco industry documents stating BAT considered adolescents over 15 years old to be “adults” in their studies in Argentina. Although the marketing plans do not mention teenagers explicitly, this evidence suggests that cigarette advertising was targeted at these youth segments. The cigarette marketing campaign promoted lifestyle activities with teen appeal in an attempt to make smoking a socially acceptable new activity. In addition, “young adult” marketing strategies may also promote smoking to older teenagers, who see young adults as their role models.⁴⁶⁶⁶

Tobacco industry activities in other countries have preceded the Argentina experience. BAT studied different variables in the segmentation process, including urban compared to rural location, affluence and education as predictors of brand choice, especially in developing countries, and gender as a predictor of tar-level consumption. They concluded that psychographic segmentation was the tool with more analytical power, and that the segmentation of all consumers along the dimension of “progressive” versus “conservative” helped explain brand choice better than other variables.¹⁷ Philip Morris used the same method to study young adult smokers in the United States. For example, they found four segments of women: “90s traditionalists,” “uptown girls,” “mavericks” and “wallflowers,” who differed in attitudes, social patterns and cigarettes brand choice, and Philip Morris approached marketing to each group differently.¹⁸

Argentina has no national legislative restrictions on tobacco advertisement although local and regional ordinances restricting smoking in public places have been approved since 2006. The tobacco industry follows a set of self-imposed restrictions in order to anticipate potential legislation that would prohibit advertisement.⁶⁷ Within these guidelines they eliminated television advertisement before 10 pm at night and any billboard or other publicity in the vicinity of schools. However, they did not place any restrictions on print advertisement, and the newspapers with the largest daily circulation have a disproportionate amount of cigarette advertisement. These appear as paid advertisements for a particular brand, or advertisements that mention a cigarette brand associated with sponsorship of a music or sports event. In 1996 BAT disclosed tar concentration on cigarette packages of the Kent Super Light cigarettes to anticipate and prevent stronger governmental regulations.⁶⁸ This voluntary measure could have been a strategy used to prevent stronger national regulations by appearing to keep consumers informed about what they smoke. Although Argentina is one of the countries that signed the Framework Convention for Tobacco Control (FCTC) sponsored by the World Health Organization on 25 September 2003, the FCTC has not been ratified by congress.

The success of the advertising strategies discussed here and the lack of a ban on cigarette advertising may contribute to the high prevalence of tobacco consumption in Argentina.⁶⁹ Effective tobacco control policies must include a comprehensive advertising ban and counter-advertising strategies designed to undermine the messages of tobacco industry. In Argentina a total ban is highly improbable in the near future, but counter-marketing campaigns may be a feasible option. For young people these campaigns should be tailored according to political and socioeconomic differences.⁷⁰ For example, a tailored campaign to counter efforts to reach “conservatives” might include informing them about how tobacco marketers have attempted to exploit their national pride to sell cigarettes. A tailored campaign for “progressives” might point out how it is false to associate American lifestyle with smoking, as Americans are smoking less and less. Counter-advertising should include the adverse effects of secondhand smoke on others, particularly young children.

In conclusion, Philip Morris and British American Tobacco companies have maintained and intensified their sales in Argentina by various mechanisms including implementation of aggressive marketing campaigns directed at youth utilising psychographic categories. Our research provides evidence in favour of a comprehensive advertising ban in Argentina and to advocate for legislation in accordance with the FCTC. It is imperative that all people involved in tobacco control policy and research collaborate in a way to achieve improved control over this epidemic that affects one-third of the population in Argentina.

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What this paper adds

Prevalence of tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoking in Argentina are among the highest in Latin America and there is no comprehensive tobacco control legislation. This paper describes the intense advertising campaigns developed by Philip Morris and British American Tobacco targeting people 16 years of age and older. Psychographic profiles similar to those used in other countries have been developed in Argentina to target adolescents and young adults.

Psychographic segmentation in Argentina

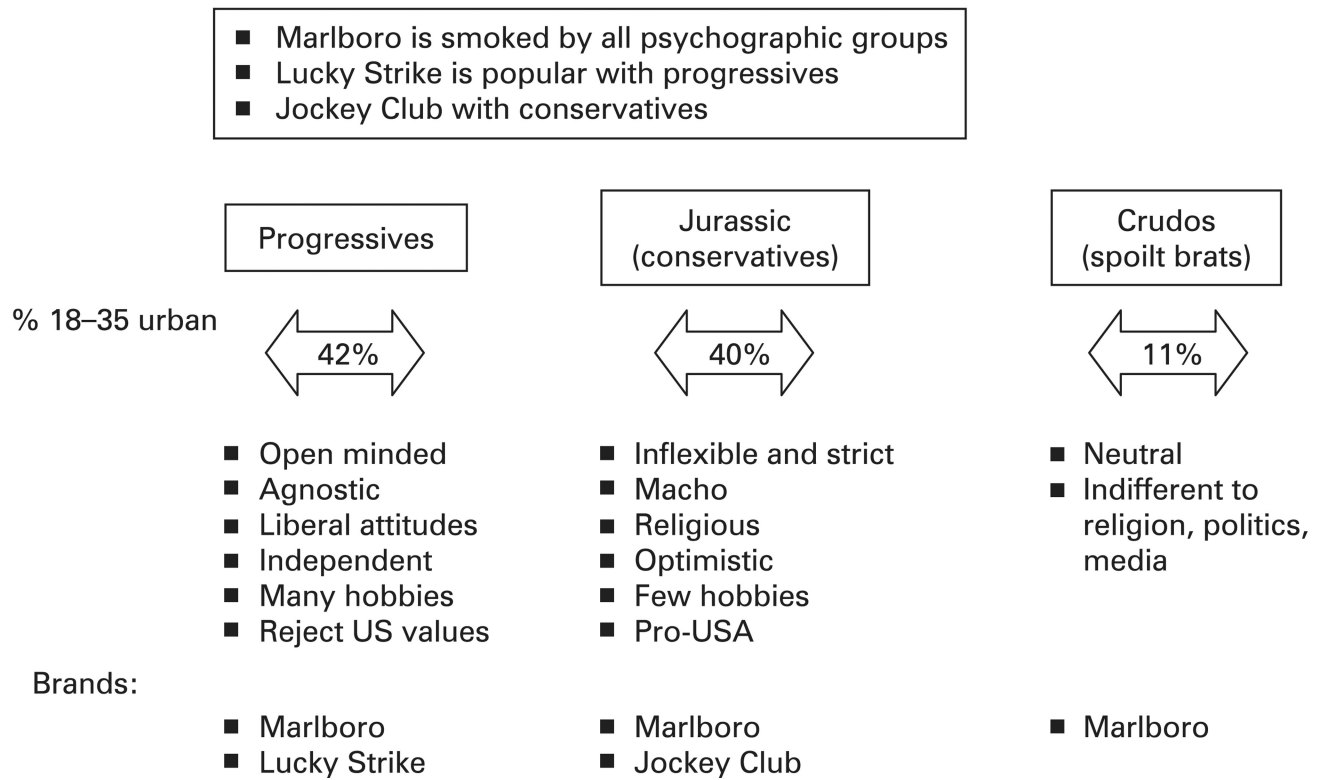


Figure 1. BAT psychographic segmentation in Argentina. (Source: Project Apertura 19945.)

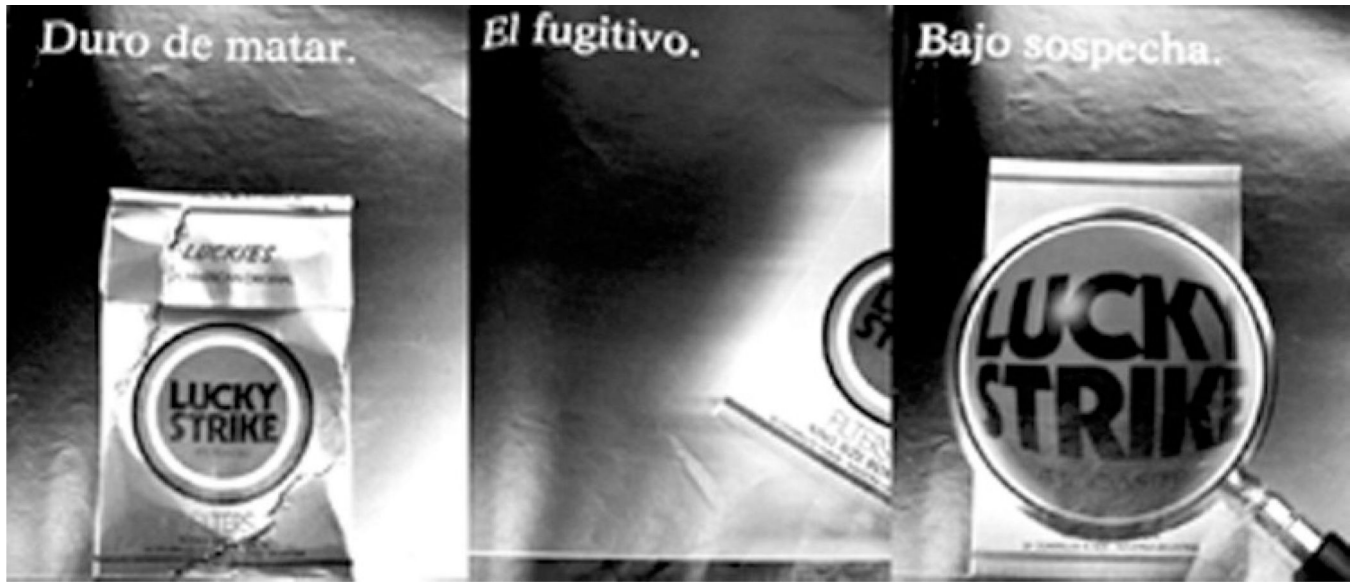


Figure 2.
Hollywood movie themes as marketing strategy used by BAT. From left to right *Die Hard*,
The Fugitive and *Under Suspicion*.



Figure 3. Campaign tailored to the “conservatives”. This picture is from the Islas Malvinas and the legend said, “From these islands I wanted to see the sea”.



Figure 4. Daniel Scioli, the vice president of Argentina, is shown in a race boat photograph with the Marlboro logo.

Table 1

Leading cigarette brands and corresponding market share (%) in the Argentinean market, 1999–2002

	1999	2000	2001	2002
Nobleza Piccardo (BAT)				
Jockey Club	12.6	12.6	12.5	12.3
Derby	11.3	11.2	11.1	11.0
Camel	6.1	7.4	7.6	7.8
Parisiennes	3.6	3.7	3.6	3.6
Lucky Strike	1.1	1.5	1.7	1.8
Others	5.2	4.7	4.6	4.9
Total market share	40.0	41.3	41.9	42.3
Mazzalin-Particulares (Philip Morris)				
Marlboro	34.6	33.6	33.0	32.7
Le Mans	6.2	6.1	6.1	6.1
Philip Morris	4.5	5.5	6.0	6.1
Parliament	3.6	3.4	3.3	3.3
L&M	3.6	3.5	3.4	3.4
Chesterfield	2.2	1.9	1.8	1.7
Total market share	60.0	58.7	58.1	57.7

Nobleza Piccardo Company Plan 2001–2002 (<http://bat.library.ucsf.edu/tid/fyu07a99>).