

Protecting children from tobacco

Product display is advertising

Leading adman John Bevins says retail display of tobacco is advertising – and it works, particularly with children.

Displaying cigarettes normalises them.

But it also advertises them - and isn't cigarette advertising banned?

By displaying products important advertising objectives are achieved... in a more direct way than can be achieved through paid media.

Advertising via display achieves *brand awareness*, a fundamental goal of advertising. Like all effective advertising, it helps put the product and the category in the mind of the prospect. After all, as the aphorism so clearly warns: 'out of sight, out of mind'.

Being there on display is very good 'brand-awareness' advertising. This form of brand-awareness advertising costs the advertiser nothing (apart from materials provided to retailers, and perhaps some 'rent').

Better still, it pays both advertiser and retailer because it achieves the most fundamental advertising objective of all:

It sells.

In everything from cornflakes to cars, display at the point of purchase is 'advertising that sells'. This is why manufacturers battle so hard for 'shelf facings' in supermarkets.



Display advertising sells, in two ways:

One, by triggering an impulse. We have all bought something that otherwise we'd not have bought had it not caught our eye. Product display is advertising that can directly ensure the most desired result of all: an *immediate* sale. It is better advertising in that respect than virtually all media advertising.

The second way this advertising sells is by cultivating (although perhaps not as effectively as media advertising) desire.

All those brand names, all in a row. *En masse* they make big statements:

'Look at us, we are important.'

'Look at us, lots of people buy us (why else would we be here?)'

Such displays become Social Proof.

Social Proof, the theory espoused by Professor Robert B. Cialdini in his book *Influence*, holds that one method people use to determine what is correct is to find out what others believe is correct. People often view a behaviour as more correct to the degree they see others performing it.

Displaying cigarettes is a way to advertise, most convincingly, that lots of people buy cigarettes, that 'we are still a popular product'.

And to kids these displays, with all their well-meaning warnings, say:

'Look at us, we are not for you.'

'Look at us, we are out of reach'.

Forbidden fruit.

Ironically, displaying/advertising cigarettes so conspicuously as 'wrong' for all kids is a way of making cigarettes a 'rite' for some teenagers.

Whether by accident or design, it must help recruit smokers.

John Bevins

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