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Winston's "No Additives" Campaign: "Straight Up"? "No Bull"?

S Y N O P S I S

Objective. The author used data from a larger study to examine adolescents' and adults' responses to Winston cigarettes' "No Additives" advertising campaign.

Methods. The author analyzed responses from 400 adolescents ages 12–17 and 203 adults ages 30–50 who were asked what they believed the meaning of the "No Additives" slogan to be. The author also analyzed adolescents' responses to questions about four specific Winston "No Additives" ads.

Results. Two-thirds of adolescents and 27% of adults believed that "No Additives" meant one or more of the following: that Winston cigarettes are healthier than other cigarettes, that they are less likely to harm health, or that they are less likely to be addictive. Adolescents perceived the models in three ads to be younger than 25 years old. Among adolescent respondents, smokers were more likely than nonsmokers to like the ads and to believe the ads made smoking more appealing.

Conclusions. The "No Additives" slogan was perceived by a majority of adolescents and about a quarter of adults as implying one or more health claims. The results of this analysis suggest that the Federal Trade Commission's action in requiring a disclaimer on the "No Additives" ads is well founded but the disclaimer should be strengthened.

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Once the most popular cigarette in the United States, R.J. Reynolds's Winston brand saw its market share begin to decline in the 1970s as Marlboro's market share grew; this decline continued through the 1980s.¹ Winston's long decline was at last reversed in 1997. The brand's market share increased from 5.4% to 5.8% in the third quarter of 1997 and has continued to grow since that time.^{2,3} The source of this reversal was the "repositioning" of the Winston brand through a new advertising campaign launched in the summer of 1997.² The campaign presents Winston as a "Straight Up" brand, a cigarette with "100% Tobacco." The ads promise "No Additives" and "No Bull," only "True Taste."

Although RJR has stated that the intention of the ads is simply to communicate that, in contrast to other brands, no non-tobacco ingredients such as cocoa or licorice are added to the Winston tobacco blend,³ the "No Additives" slogan can also be seen as an implicit health claim. "No additives" is, after all, a claim that is not original to Winston's new ad campaign. The statement "no additives or preservatives" has been made for many foods in recent decades, especially foods that are marketed for their health advantages. In March 1999, the Federal Trade Commission recognized the possible deceptiveness of the "No Additives" slogan by announcing that RJR would be required to include a statement on Winston ads that "No additives in our tobacco does NOT mean a safer cigarette."⁴

Until now no data have been presented showing what people believe to be the meaning of "No Additives" in Winston advertisements. The purpose of the present data analysis was to investigate adolescents' and adults' responses to the ads in Winston's "No Additives" campaign, with a focus on whether they would interpret the "No Additives" slogan as an implicit health claim. Adolescents were of particular interest because ages 12 to 17 are the years when virtually all smoking initiation occurs,⁵ and it is possible that accepting the validity of an implicit health claim would make adolescents more likely to begin smoking. Adolescents were expected to be more likely than adults to perceive "No Additives" as an implicit health claim.

Source of data for present analysis. I conducted the present analysis using data from a larger study of responses to cigarette advertisements. Four hundred adolescents ages 12–17 (188 male, 212 female) and 203 adults ages 30–50 (95 male, 108 female) participated in

the study. One hundred adolescents participated in each of four cities: Tucson, Arizona; Phoenix, Arizona; Spokane, Washington; and Seattle, Washington. About half (100) of the adults participated in Spokane, Washington, and about half (103) in Seattle, Washington.

Respondents were asked to choose their ethnic identification from the following categories: Black/African American, Asian American, white, Hispanic/Latino, Native American, and other. Seventy-eight percent of the adolescents and 83% of the adults self-identified as white; the rest were from various ethnic groups, none representing more than 10% of the sample. This racial/ethnic distribution is roughly equivalent to the distribution in the overall US population.⁶

Data collection took place in the summer of 1998 at four large urban shopping malls using the consumer intercept method, as described in a report by DiFranza et al.⁷ Research assistants who were blind to the hypotheses of the study approached each person who appeared to be in the target age range and asked if they would be willing to take part in the study. Once it was confirmed that they met the age criterion, adolescents were offered a \$10 voucher toward purchases at a mall music store in return for their participation; adults were not offered any compensation. More than 80% of the adolescents and more than 60% of the adults who were approached agreed to participate. The questionnaire for adolescents took about 15 to 20 minutes to complete, and the shorter version of the questionnaire used for adults took 5 to 10 minutes to complete.

The first part of the questionnaire contained questions about smoking behavior and attitudes, with most of the items taken from previous studies.⁸ Smoking/non-smoking status was measured by asking participants whether they had smoked one or more cigarettes within the previous 30 days. Smokers were asked to indicate the brand they preferred to smoke.

Adults were asked how many times they had seen any Winston ad that included the "No Additives" slogan. Adolescents were asked for responses to 14 print cigarette advertisements, including four ads that were part of the Winston "No Additives" campaign at the time.

Adolescents' responses to ads. For each of the 14 ads, adolescents were asked to indicate how many times they had seen the ad (choosing from structured responses: "never," "1–5 times," "6–10 times," "11–20 times," and "more than 20 times"), how much they liked the ad (on a four-point scale, from "like it very much" to "dislike it very much"), and, "Do you think the ad makes smoking more

appealing?" (on a four-point scale, from "yes, very much" to "no, not at all"). The questions about whether they liked the ad and whether they found it appealing were similar to those used in a previous study of adolescents' responses to cigarette advertisements.⁹

Adolescents were also asked to indicate (in an open-ended question) what they believed to be the age of each model in each ad. These questions were included because the tobacco companies have pledged for more than 30 years, as part of the Cigarette Advertising and Promotion Code, that "No one depicted in cigarette advertising shall be or appear to be under 25 years of age."¹⁰

Winston ads. The four Winston ads that were included among the 14 ads shown to adolescents were as follows:

Winston A: Photo of bare-shouldered girl with short black hair. No cigarette shown. "No Additives/True Taste/Straight Up" in lower right corner. Caption: "Do blondes have more fun? If you can find a real one, ask her."

Winston B: Photo of ponytailed girl in low-cut denim shirt holding cigarette. "No Additives/100% Tobacco/True Taste/No Bull" on lower left. Caption: "Yeah, I got a tattoo. And no, you can't see it."

Winston C: Photo of awkward-looking boy with thick glasses and bad haircut and beautiful long-haired blonde girl in short skirt holding a cigarette. Both are seated on a wall, with her legs crossed over one of his legs. "No Additives/True Taste/No Bull" on lower left. Caption: "At least when I wake up, my smokes will be real."

Winston D: Photo of a man in a tie, white shirt, and dress pants, edited to make it look like his head is literally up his rear end. "No Additives/True Taste/Straight Up" in lower right corner. Caption: "Still smoking additives?"

Meaning of "No Additives." Both adolescents and the adults were asked, "What do you think the Winston ads mean by saying that Winstons have 'no additives'? Circle ALL of the things you think the ads mean by saying 'no additives.'" There were five response options. The first two were statements of the most direct meaning of "No Additives" and were intended to represent RJR's public claims about the meaning of the slogan: "Winston cigarettes contain only tobacco" and "Winston cigarettes contain no added chemicals." These two response options were placed just after the question. (Some studies have found that options that appear first on multiple-choice questions are more likely to be selected. Placing these

response options first made for a more stringent test of the hypotheses of the study.) The other three response options were health claims: "Winston cigarettes are healthier than other cigarettes," "Winston cigarettes are less likely than other cigarettes to harm your health," and "Winston cigarettes are less likely than other cigarettes to be addictive."

METHODS

I used chi-square tests to compare the responses of adolescents and adults or smokers and nonsmokers with regard to the meaning of "No Additives," exposure to the ads, and perceptions of the ages of the models.

I conducted linear regression analyses to compare adolescent smokers and nonsmokers in terms of the percentages who said they liked the ads and said they believed the ads made smoking more appealing (Table 3). I included age, gender, and state of residence (Arizona or Washington State) in the regression equations, both to control for these variables in relation to smoking status and to examine if any of these variables would influence whether the adolescents liked the ads and believed the ads made smoking more appealing. Age was entered a continuous variable (12 to 17). Although 22% of the adolescents were non-white, I did not include ethnicity in the analyses because, although smoking behavior has been shown to vary widely across ethnic groups,⁵ there were too few individuals in each of the non-white ethnic groups to make valid comparisons between them.

RESULTS

The results of the chi-square analyses are presented together for adolescents in Arizona and Washington for clarity of presentation and because the results from the two states were highly similar. (State of residence was included as a variable in the regression analyses.)

Twenty-five percent of the adolescents and 32% percent of the adults reported having smoked at least one cigarette in the previous 30 days. Marlboro was the brand most preferred by adolescent smokers (45%), followed by Camel (16%) and Newport (16%). None of the adolescents identified Winston as their preferred brand. Fifteen percent of adolescent smokers indicated that they had no preferred brand. Marlboro was also the brand most preferred by adult smokers (31%), followed by Camel (10%), Newport (6%), and Winston (6%). Fourteen percent of adult smokers indicated that they had no preferred brand.

Meaning of “No Additives.” The response frequencies to the question about the meaning of “No Additives” are shown in Table 1. I compared smokers with non-smokers in preliminary analyses of the responses to this question and found no differences, so the results are presented for smokers and nonsmokers combined.

For adolescents and adults, the response chosen most often was one of the literal meanings, “Winston cigarettes contain no chemicals.” However, a substantial proportion of the adolescents believed that “No Additives” implied each of the three health claims. Adolescents were twice as likely as adults to believe that “No Additives” means that Winston cigarettes are “healthier than other cigarettes”; twice as likely to believe it means that Winstons are “less likely than other cigarettes to harm your health”; and three times as likely to believe it means that Winstons are “less likely than other cigarettes to be addictive.” Chi-square tests showed significant differences between adolescents and adults with regard to the three health claims ($P < 0.01$ for each). Overall, 67% of the adolescents believed that RJR was making at least one of the three health claims, compared with 27% of the adults.

Age of models. The majority of adolescents perceived the models in two Winston ads as being younger than 25 years old—64% for the model in the Winston A ad, 74% for the female model in the Winston C ad, and 76% for the male model in the Winston C ad. Nearly half of the adolescents (46%) perceived the model in the Winston B ad as younger than 25 years old. The questionnaire did not ask about the age of the model in the Winston D ad because his face is not visible. Chi-square tests revealed no differences between adolescent smokers and non-smokers in their perceptions of the ages of the models.

Responses to ads. The proportion of adolescents who had seen each ad ranged from 16% to 42% (Table 2). From about one-fourth to about one-half of the adolescents indicated that they liked a given ad. From 13% to 31% of the adolescents indicated that they believed a given ad made smoking more appealing. Among adults (not shown in table), 44% of smokers and 23% of non-smokers said they had seen at least one ad for the “No Additives” campaign; the difference between smokers and nonsmokers was significant ($X^2 = 15.46, P < 0.01$).

Table 1. Adolescents' and adults' perceptions of the meaning of “No Additives” in advertisements for Winston cigarettes, 1998

Meaning	Percent who circled the indicated meaning	
	Adolescents ages 12–17 n = 400	Adults ages 30–50 n = 203
Only tobacco	42	44
No added chemicals	61	72
Healthier than other cigarettes ^a	36	18
Less likely to be harmful than other cigarettes ^a	39	20
Less likely to be addictive than other cigarettes ^a	42	14

^aSignificant difference between adolescents and adults, chi-square test, $P < 0.01$

Regression analyses. The regression analyses showed that among adolescents, smokers were more likely than nonsmokers to like the ads and to believe the ads made smoking more appealing. The regression analyses also indicated that younger adolescents liked the ads more than older adolescents, that young men liked the ads more than young women, that more young men than young women thought the ads made smoking appealing, and that adolescents in Arizona liked the ads more than those in Washington State.

DISCUSSION

Is Winston's “No Additives” advertising campaign deceptive? The results of this study suggest that the answer to this question is yes. Perhaps most disturbing, the results of this study suggest that “No Additives” is especially likely to deceive adolescents. Two-thirds of the adolescents in this study perceived “No Additives” as meaning one or more of the following: that Winston cigarettes are healthier than other cigarettes, less likely to harm health, or less addictive. Although the questionnaire asked specifically, “What do you think the Winston ads mean by saying that Winstons have ‘no additives?’,” it is likely that respondents' answers reflected the extent of their own belief in each of these health claims.

These findings are alarming because adolescents ages 12–17 are at the ages of greatest susceptibility to initiation of smoking.⁵ Ninety-percent of people who smoke begin smoking by age 18.⁵ In a recent study, I found evidence that one key reason for the heightened susceptibility of

Table 2. Adolescents' responses to advertisements for Winston cigarettes, 1998

Ad	Percent who reported having seen the ad			Percent who reported that they liked the ad ^a			Percent who said the ad made smoking more appealing ^b		
	All n = 400	Smokers ^c n = 100	Nonsmokers n = 300	All n = 400	Smokers ^c n = 100	Nonsmokers n = 300	All n = 400	Smokers ^c n = 100	Nonsmokers n = 300
Winston A	22	23	21	29	35	26	24	28	23
Winston B	42	39	43	33	46	29	25	37	21
Winston C	28	32	27	34	51	29	31	45	26
Winston D	16	13	18	49	56	46	13	21	11

^a"Like it very much" and "somewhat like it"

^b"Yes, very much" and "yes, somewhat"

^c"Smokers" were defined as people who reported having smoked at least one cigarette in the previous 30 days.

adolescents to smoking initiation is that they tend to have an optimistic bias about the risks of smoking—many of them believe that the risks of smoking are more likely to apply to others than to themselves.¹¹ Believing that it is possible to smoke a cigarette that is healthier, less harmful, or less addictive than other cigarettes is likely to inflate whatever optimistic bias they already possess.

The results of the present study provide support for the Federal Trade Commission's March 1999 decision to require RJR to include a statement on Winston ads that "No additives in our tobacco does NOT mean a safer cigarette."⁴ However, it is notable that the statement is allowed by the FTC regulation to be as small as 40% the size of the current Surgeon General's warning (which is already small). Such a small warning may easily be overlooked, especially in light of the appeal the visual images of the advertisements hold for some adolescents (especially adolescent smokers), as the present study has shown. Research is needed to examine whether the required statement is effective in discouraging the perception of "No Additives" as a health claim.

None of the adolescent smokers in this study identified Winston as their preferred brand, while only 6% of the adult smokers did so. The "No Additives" campaign was less than a year old at the time of the data collection, and it appears that the campaign had not had an impact on brand preferences among adolescents. Fewer than half of the adolescents in this study had seen any one of the four ads, compared with more than 90% who had seen at least one ad featuring the Marlboro Man or Joe Camel, as reported in a previous study.⁹ It will be important to examine adolescents' brand preferences again after the "No Additives" campaign has been running for two or three years to see if adolescents' brand preferences are

influenced after more of them have been exposed to the ads.

The perceived ages of the models in the ads were strikingly youthful. More than 60% of the adolescents perceived each of the models in two ads to be younger than 25 years old. This finding is especially notable because it suggests that the ads are in violation of the industry's own Cigarette Advertising and Promotion Code.¹⁰

As part of the December 1998 multibillion-dollar settlement reached between the major tobacco companies and a consortium of state attorneys general, the tobacco companies agreed not to target young people in their advertising, directly or indirectly. It would seem reasonable to interpret cigarette ads with youthful models as having at least an indirect appeal to young people. Indeed, substantial proportions of the adolescents in the present study, especially the smokers, liked each of the four ads from the "No Additives" campaign, and for three of the four ads, 20% or more said the ad made smoking more appealing. Implementation of the tobacco companies' promise not to target young people should not rely on the companies' good will but will require vigorous enforcement to have any important influence on reducing smoking among adolescents.

Adults in the present study were less likely than adolescents to interpret "No Additives" as an implicit health claim. Nevertheless, for more than a quarter (27%) of the adults, "No Additives" implied at least one of the three health claims. If a substantial proportion of adult smokers believe that they are less likely to suffer health consequences as a result of smoking Winston cigarettes and switch to Winston rather than smoking fewer cigarettes or quitting altogether, this would be a serious public health concern.

Table 3. Regression analyses of adolescents' responses to advertisements for Winston cigarettes, 1998 (n = 400)

Response	Age	Gender	State in which data collected	Smoker ^a vs nonsmoker	R ²
Liked the ad					
Winston A	-0.07	0.05	0.11 ^b	-0.07	0.03 ^b
Winston B.	-0.06	0.11 ^b	0.05	-0.14 ^c	0.05 ^d
Winston C	-0.17 ^d	0.14 ^c	0.03	-0.17 ^d	0.10 ^d
Winston D	-0.21 ^d	0.08	0.13 ^c	-0.04	0.08 ^d
Ad made smoking more appealing					
Winston A	0.04	0.05	0.10 ^b	-0.08	0.02
Winston B.	0.14 ^c	0.13 ^c	0.06	-0.20 ^d	0.08 ^d
Winston C	-0.06	0.10 ^b	0.09	-0.15 ^c	0.06 ^d
Winston D	-0.01	0.07	-0.01	-0.13 ^b	0.03 ^b

NOTE: All numbers represent beta weights except those in the R² column. Age = 12-17; for gender, male = 1, female = 2; for state, Arizona = 1, Washington State = 2; for smoking status, nonsmoker = 1, smoker = 2.

^a"Smokers" were defined as people who reported having smoked at least one cigarette in the previous 30 days.

^bP < 0.05

^cP < 0.01

^dP < 0.001

Implications. The findings of this study suggest that the new Winston campaign is perceived by a majority of adolescents and a substantial proportion of adults as making health claims. To the extent that people believe them, these claims are likely to be a factor in persuading adolescents and adults to smoke and in encouraging those who have begun to smoke to continue. In addition, a substantial proportion of adolescent respondents found the four

Winston ads appealing, which suggests that the ads have an allure for the adolescents that may influence them to smoke. The FTC's current action to require a disclaimer on the ads is warranted, and more vigorous FTC action restricting the ads is needed. More generally, the findings provide further support, from a public health perspective, for banning tobacco advertising or at minimum restricting it to adults-only venues.

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