

## INCORPORATING ETHICS INTO THE MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS CLASS: THE CASE OF OLD JOE AND NEW JO CAMEL

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*The marketing communications class provides a unique opportunity to incorporate ethics into the curriculum. This article discusses ethics in general, and in the marketing communications class in particular. It includes ethical decision-making and factors that can affect this process including utilitarianism, rights, and fairness-justice beliefs. It suggests and develops the case of Joe and Jo Camel as a possible vehicle to facilitate the students' examining and understanding of ethics in the marketing communications process.*

Scandals in business and politics continue to make front page headlines in newspapers and appear as the lead story on television and radio news. Those in the marketing profession are certainly not "immune from facing a whole lot of ethical issues" (Kotler 2004, p. 30). Any company that adheres to the marketing concept of identifying and satisfying consumer needs is forced to make choices on a daily basis that may or may not be perceived as being ethical. For instance, what the customer wants may not be good for him/her or for society, therefore at the basic level is the question "is it ethical to produce and sell products that may be perceptually and/or actually harmful?" Furthermore, is it ethical to advertise these products? In the case of cigarettes, tobacco is a legal product and the commercial speech doctrine protects the marketing of tobacco products as long as it is truthful. However, this does not include whether or not the marketing of cigarettes is ethical in general, or targeting to children and/or women, specifically. Such an example—the advertising of cigarettes—may, therefore, be a useful tool for marketing educators to facilitate student learning about the ethical decision making process.

The following article provides the case of Joe Camel as a way of exposing today's students to a historically

significant marketing issue that remains relevant today. The focus of this case is R. J. Reynolds, the company that ten years after it said goodbye to *Joe Camel* introduced a cigarette in a pink package targeted to women called *Camel No. 9* and sometimes referred to as *Jo Camel* (Elliott 2007). The discussion begins with a brief overview of ethics—what it is and popular ways of teaching it. Next, the Joe Camel case study is presented with a framework for analyzing it. Finally, suggestions are offered on how to integrate the case study into the marketing communications class.

### Teaching Ethics

Ethics was derived from the Greek word *ethos* meaning custom. Aristotle defined *ethos* as "the speaker's power of evincing a personal character that make his speech credible" (McKeon 1941, p. 1318). In the case of marketing communications, the *ethos* belongs to the public (consumers) who determines if the advertiser is ethical. Ethics are basically the moral beliefs of a group (beliefs about what is right or wrong)—a set of rules for behavior. DesJardins and McCall (2005) described three different forms of ethics: descriptive (general beliefs that in fact guide behavior); normative (standards or norms that have validity independent of custom); and philosophical (a critical field of study whose subject matter is the moral beliefs of group).

In academia the topic of ethics—how, when and where it should be taught—has been the subject of much discussion. Table 1 synthesizes the body of literature that exists on this topic. The conclusion derived from this review is that ethics education, or at least awareness of ethical issues, is something that should be addressed as early as possible in the curriculum and that case study is the most popular method of instruction.

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**Table 1**  
**Teaching Business Ethics in a Marketing class: Best Practices/Recommendations**

<i>Can we teach business ethics?</i>	
Yes	Feldman and Thompson 1990
No	Andrew 1979; Miller and Miller 1976; Thurow 1987
No, but exposure increases awareness	Bok 1976; Hanson 1987; Henderson 1988; Hosmer 1988; Konrad 1978; Murray 1987
<i>Should we teach business ethics?</i>	
Yes	Bunke 1988; Dagher and Spader 1980; Feldman and Thompson 1990
<i>Who should teach business ethics?</i>	
Functional/technical business faculty	Hosmer 1988
Business communication instructors	Krohn 1985
<i>What should be taught in a business ethics course?</i>	
Principles	Hosmer 1988
Issues in research courses	Krohn 1982
Values	Feldman and Thompson 1990
Ethical problems	Singhapakdi 2004
<i>Where in the business curriculum should ethics be taught?</i>	
Separate course	George 1987; Steinberg, Dyer and Barksdale 1989
Woven throughout	Hasty et al. 1980; Murphy and Laczniak 1982
<i>When should business ethics be taught?</i>	
As early as possible	Hasty et al. 1980; Hosmer 1988; Krohn 1985; Feldman and Thompson 1990; Reynolds 2005; Scott 1986; Murray 1987
<i>How are we doing?</i>	
Not good enough	Merritt 1991; Peppas and Diskin 2000; Shannon and Berl 1997; Yoo and Donthu 2002
<i>How should we teach ethics?</i>	
Case studies	Agarwal and Malloy 2002; Buff and Yonkers 2004; Feldman and Thompson 1990; Granitz 2001; Loe and Ferrell 2001; Neil and Schibrowsky 2005; Schaupp 1992
Experiential learning	Hunt and Laverie 2004

### Joe Camel Case Study

This case concerns an issue (*smoking*) that continues to be relevant to young adults today. Just as college students are beginning to fully understand and experience their rights (smoking, drinking, voting, etc.), for the smoking population their rights continue to be tested (e.g., non-smoking restaurants). Likewise, the rights of cigarette companies continue to be further restricted especially in regard to advertising. The limiting of rights raises a question about the moral appropriateness of these limitations. The case study, with suggested questions and possible answers, is provided in Tables 2 and 3.

### How to Evaluate the Case Study

Once an ethical issue has been proposed and/or identified, it is helpful to have a process to evaluate the situation presented and to assist in making recommendations. Rest (1986) outlines four stages or "four-component model" of the ethical decision-making process to serve as an analytical tool in approaching theoretical problems, and as a basis for formulating objectives for moral education programs (p. 4). These four stages include ethical issue recognition and interpretation, moral evaluation and judgment, intention, and implementation and behavior.

**Table 2**  
**The Case of Joe and Jo Camel**

### Background

Some estimates say that tobacco kills 440,000 Americans each year (American Heart Association 2008). In 2004, the surgeon general reported that smoking harms nearly every organ of the body, causing many diseases and reducing the health of smokers (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2004). The average male smoker is fifteen times more likely to die of lung cancer than a nonsmoker, and lung cancer is responsible for 20,000 more deaths yearly in US women than breast cancer (Patel 2005). In 2006, the surgeon general added that secondhand smoke exposure can cause heart disease, and lung cancer in nonsmoking adults (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2006). Americans spend about \$70 billion a year on cigarettes (Publications International, Ltd. 2008). The Federal Trade Commission reported that cigarette manufacturers spent \$11.22 billion on advertising and promotion (Federal Trade Commission 2001).

### History

The Public Health Cigarette Smoking Act of 1969 required warning labels on cigarette packs. When President Nixon signed it into law in 1971, it banned radio and television advertising of cigarettes in 1971. R. J. Reynolds, along with other tobacco manufacturers, turned to print and direct mail for the bulk of its promotions. Despite the fact that Americans each year continued to smoke, sales of established cigarette brands, such as R.J. Reynolds' Camel Filters, had declined in the 1980's. In 1987, in an effort to reverse the trend, Reynolds introduced an updated advertising campaign (Figure 1) featuring the cartoon camel known as *Old Joe*. Joe Camel, as it was called, was conceived in the 1950's by an unknown art director in France working on a T-shirt promotion for the brand in Europe. The R.J. Reynolds U.S. marketing department, looking for a way to promote Camel's 75th anniversary, re-discovered Joe in the company's archives. At that time, R.J. Reynolds found that the Camel brand had an old man's reputation. They wanted a new campaign to make the brand more attractive to a new generation of smokers. Ads featuring Joe Camel rejuvenated the brand in print advertising (Joe was depicted as a "Smooth Character" playing pool, flying planes and on safari). Reynolds eventually added females to the cast of Camel characters. In four-page, full-color ads appearing in *People*, *Us*, *Glamour*, *Redbook*, and *Sports Illustrated*, Josephine Camels crowded Joe's Place, the bar setting of other Joe Camel ads. Male and female camels shot pool, threw darts, and played cards, all the while smoking or holding lighted cigarettes. In five years, the brand's market share grew from 2.7 percent to 4.1 percent, a notable rise for a 75-year-old brand (Belch and Belch 2001). Many attributed the Camel sales increase to the popularity of advertisements and sales promotions featuring Joe. The news for RJR Tobacco, however, was not all good. Antismoking activists criticized the manufacturer for creating a campaign that they argued, targeted children and demanded the removal of Joe Camel.

RJR executives openly admitted picking a "spokescartoon" with a contemporary image to attract younger customers, but the question many critics raised was how young? Three studies published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (DiFranza et al. 1991; Fischer et al. 1991; Pierce et al. 1991) suggested that Joe Camel's audience was far too young, that recognition of the character was higher among children than adults, and that cartoon camel ads and promotions encouraged children to smoke. Among all age groups, children ages 12 and 13 were the most familiar with the "Smooth Character" campaign, and a majority of 6-year-olds associate Joe Camel with cigarettes as clearly as they do *Mickey Mouse* with the Disney Channel (Belch and Belch 2001). While the studies concluded that cigarette advertising encourages children to smoke and thus should be banned, they, in fact, only observed that Joe Camel was as highly recognizable as Mickey Mouse. R.J. Reynolds disputed all three of the studies. Company officials contended that the statistics were inaccurate, denied that the Joe campaign targeted children, and asserted that just because children could identify Joe didn't mean they would buy the product. R.J. Reynolds funded an independent study (Mizerski 1995) that showed that despite the high awareness of Joe Camel among children, kids still didn't like smoking. The study supported the findings that children recognized Joe Camel as well as Mickey Mouse, but that they had a negative attitude toward him and towards smoking.

Nonetheless, the American Medical Association asked R.J. Reynolds Nabisco to cease the advertising campaign. R.J. Reynolds refused, and the Joe Camel campaign continued. Reynolds continued to defend its right to advertise

(continued)

**Table 2 (continued)**  
**The Case of Joe and Jo Camel**

a legal product and had no plans to pull Joe. The American Advertising Federation supported the company, citing unconstitutional restrictions on advertising (Elliott 1994). In 1993 and 1994, more appeals were made to end the campaign. The American Medical Association and the U.S. Surgeon General again requested that RJR voluntarily remove Old Joe from all its advertising and promotion. The Coalition on Smoking and health petitioned the Federal Trade Commission to take action against the camel, as did some at the FTC. The FTC commissioners voted three to two against pursuing the case, giving R.J. Reynolds and Joe Camel a reprieve (Broder 1997).

Finally, on July 10, 1997, RJR announced it would voluntarily end its Joe Camel campaign and stop using him in advertisements. A new campaign began with a four-legged, non-animated camel. R.J. Reynolds, to this day, has denied Joe Camel was intended for children. Joe Camel continues to be considered one the most popular cultural ad icons of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

On January 1, 2007, almost ten years after the death of Joe Camel, R.J. Reynolds introduced Camel 9 (Figure 2) targeted toward women. With it, a new Jo Camel was born. The new female-targeted cigarette is called "Camel No. 9," a name intended to inspire the imagery of a fragrance ("Chanel No. 5") and love ("Love Potion No. 9"). Only about 30% of Camel buyers are female (as compared with 40% of Marlboro buyers), and R.J. Reynolds is hoping that the new pink (regular) and green (menthol) packages will attract a larger share of female smoker (Elliot 2007). The company has been criticized for its "colorful and feminine" Camel No. 9 ads, which were run in fashion magazines and seen as "cynically aimed at young women" (Noveck 2007).

On November 27, 2007, RJ Reynolds, under pressure from anti-smoking groups and members of Congress (see Ives and York 2007) concerning the Camel No. 9 ads and an advertising section in *Rolling Stone* magazine, announced that it would stop advertising its brands in newspapers and consumer magazines beginning in 2008. On December 5, 2007, Attorney general offices in at least eight states announced they were planning to file lawsuits against RJ Reynolds (American Inc.) for the illustrated advertising section in *Rolling Stone* magazine, claiming it "violates the tobacco industry's nine-year-old promise not to use cartoons to sell cigarettes" ("States to Sue Reynolds" 2007). The section featured nine pages of Camel ads and *Rolling Stone* rock music illustrations. A spokesperson for Reynolds contends that the Camel ads themselves contained no cartoons and had no prior knowledge of graphics that *Rolling Stone* planned to use.

**Figure 1**  
**Joe Camel**

