

ADVERTISING CREATED & CONTINUES TO DRIVE THE MENTHOL TOBACCO MARKET: Methods Used by The Industry to Target Youth, Women, & Black Americans

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Dr. Jackler conceived the project and was the principal author of the manuscript. Ms. Ramamurthi was the primary co-author and helped to edit the entire manuscript. Ms. Chau helped to assemble illustrations and assisted with copy editing. Dr. Willett was co-author of the regulation section and provided input on the overall project. Co-authors Muoneke, Ramakrishnan, Zeng, M. Chang, E. Chang, and Bahk served as 2022 SRITA summer research interns and made important contributions to the investigation.

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Dr. Jackler serves as an expert witness in State Attorney General's JUUL legal actions

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose of this Research Paper:

Under a 2009 Federal law, cigarettes in the United States can only be marketed in two characterizing flavors: tobacco and menthol. The law is more liberal with cigarillos and cigars, which can still be marketed in a wide array of flavors. In April 2022, the US Food and Drug Administration announced a proposal to remove menthol cigarettes and flavored cigarillos and cigars from the market.

The goal of this research paper is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the role advertising has played, and continues to play, in driving the popularity of menthol tobacco products. Our investigation spans menthol advertising from its inception in the 1920s through today. Our purpose in undertaking this project is to provide regulators, legislators, litigators, and the public with a meticulously documented resource on the role of advertising of menthol brands in establishing their appeal to health-concerned smokers, youth, Black people, women, and other market segments purposefully targeted by the industry.

This Investigation Documents Two Principal Findings:

- **The prodigious growth in popularity of menthol cigarettes over recent decades did not arise spontaneously – it was orchestrated by major tobacco companies.**

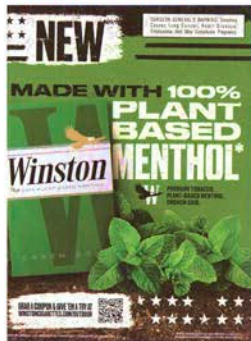
The steady rise in menthol cigarette use was a product of intense, persistent, and highly skilled targeting of Black people, women, youth, and other populations by the marketing departments of RJ Reynolds, Lorillard, Brown & Williamson, Philip Morris, and other major tobacco companies. These campaigns were deceptive in the way they misled the public about the supposed healthfulness of menthol cigarettes and duped customers into believing that smoking menthols would make them “cool.”

- **Recent menthol cigarette advertising has not modulated from its excesses of the past.**

Indeed, over the most recent decade, menthol cigarette marketers have continued to deceive smokers and target Black people, youth, and women with unabated vigor and creativity. Menthol brands have become “greenwashed” with depictions such as “organic,” “additive-free,” and even “plant-based” menthol that is delivered “from farm to pack,” all of which falsely imply a healthier product. Advertising themes of youthfulness, coolness, and femininity, along with imagery associating menthol with partying and popular music, continue undiminished. Entire new categories of menthol delivery have emerged, such as “crushers” that flood the senses with a surge of menthol flavor.

Modern Menthol Cigarette Advertising:

Winston 2020



2021



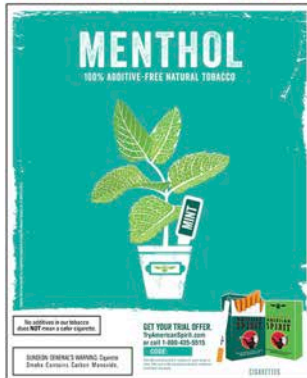
2021



2022



American Spirit 2012



2012



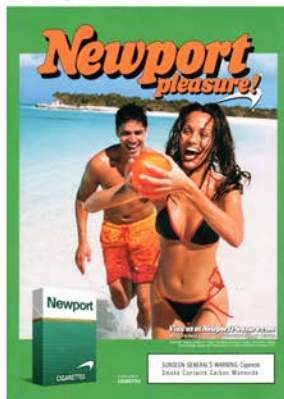
2013



2020



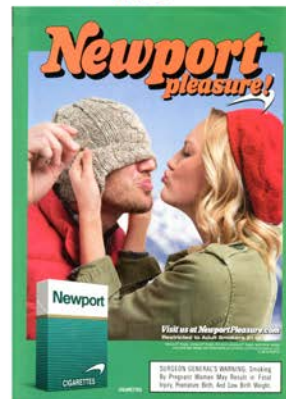
Newport 2016



2016



2016



2021



2021



Growth in the Menthol Market:

Introduced to the market in 1925 and nationally advertised since 1933, menthol cigarettes did not develop a major share of the American cigarette market until the 1960s. Since then, the market share of menthol cigarettes has steadily risen. Today, menthol brands comprise 37% of the entire US cigarette market and are used by 85% of Black smokers. Over half of teen smokers start with a menthol brand. Among Black teens, the rate of menthol smoking is over 90%.

The growing popularity of menthol cigarettes did not evolve organically driven solely by evolving consumer preferences. Rather, growth among Black people and youthful starter smokers was purposefully engineered by decades of advertising campaigns designed to target these market segments.

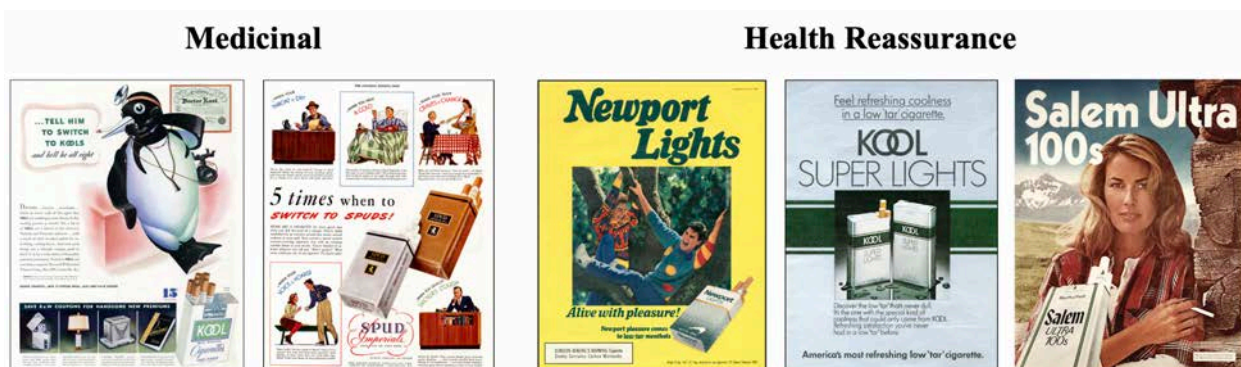
Categorical menthol brands (Newport, KOOL, Salem) are joined in the menthol marketplace by menthol-flavored extensions of major cigarette brands (Marlboro, Camel, Pall Mall). In menthol sales leadership Newport (31%) is followed by the major brand extensions Marlboro (26%) and Camel (8%).

As a sign of the strong emphasis placed by major tobacco companies on menthol, Marlboro is offered in 11 menthol variants (Black Menthol, Gold Pack, Silver Pack, Smooth Ice, Bold Ice, etc.), while Camel sells 12 types of menthol cigarettes (Turkish Jade, No. 9 Menthe, Wides Menthol Silver, Crush Smooth, Crush Rich, etc.). Market leader Newport markets 7 menthol variants (Original, Blue, Gold, Platinum, Smooth, Boost, Boost Gold).

Menthol Advertising: Medicinal & Health Reassurance

While menthol is widely known for its beneficial medicinal uses (e.g., cough drops, Vick's VapoRub, Bengay ointment, Listerine mouthwash) menthol cigarettes are deadly. Early advertisements falsely messaged that menthol cigarettes had health benefits, such as soothing the throat and countering airway irritation. Some advertisements even suggested switching to a menthol brand to alleviate cough or cold symptoms. Menthol brands featured doctors in their marketing and even solicited doctors via advertisements in medical journals. The goal was to encourage doctors to advise their patients to switch to their menthol brand as a healthier alternative.

The industry's deceptive advertising strategies have been successful, as studies show that many smokers falsely believe menthol cigarettes are safer. When it became illegal for the industry to directly claim health benefits, menthol marketers turned to health proxy terms such as mild, light, super light, and ultra light. Recently, light-colored packs have been used to falsely suggest lesser harm.



Menthol Advertising: “Fresh” & “Cool”

Menthol advertisers heavily employ two shrewdly chosen key descriptors: “Fresh” and “Cool.” Both buzzwords convey multiple meanings and implant conscious and subconscious reasons for preferring menthol in the minds of consumers.

The term “fresh,” which is pervasive in menthol marketing, has numerous positive connotations. Fresh suggests that the cigarette will be pure, cool, crisp, and pristine as in “fresh air.” Freshness also implies unspoiled and unadulterated, as in “fresh produce,” which underpins its health reassurance implication. Among youth and young adults, “fresh” is also used to refer to something that is fashionable and hip.

The term “cool” implies a pleasant throat sensation and strongly reinforces the concept that menthol brands are trendy and stylish. In common usage, the term “cool” is an expression of approval and admiration, especially among American teens and young adults. Achieving “coolness” conveys acceptance and admiration by peers. Marketers chose their models in menthol advertisements to exude coolness. Indeed, the industry often refers to menthol brands as the “coolness segment.”



Menthol Youth-Targeted Advertising:

Menthol and mint flavorings have a special appeal among youth, particularly starter smokers. Adding menthol or mint masks tobacco’s unpleasant flavor, partially anesthetizes the throat, and reduces coughing among starter smokers.

Many menthol cigarette campaigns, representing all major brands, explicitly targeted the youth market. Examples include Newport’s Alive with Pleasure, Salem Spirit, Kool Mixx, and Joe Camel Menthol. In fact, all advertisements that glorify menthol as chic, trendy, and popular enhance their appeal to youth.

Based on its longevity and impact on market share, the single most effective youth-targeted cigarette promotion of all time was Lorillard’s Newport brand “Alive with Pleasure” campaign, which persisted for a remarkable 44 years (1972 – 2016). Most advertising campaigns have a short lifespan and sunset after a few months or a year or two. The durability of Newport’s campaign is a testament to its extraordinary success. Aware that teens seek to emulate those a few years older than themselves, the campaign featured 20-something models behaving like playful young teenagers typically presented as either joyful social groups or romantic couples. The patently

youth-targeted “Alive with Pleasure” campaign established Newport as a dominant youth starter brand, the #1 best-selling menthol brand, and the #2 best-selling cigarette in the US after Marlboro.

Through the 1980s, Newport, Salem, and Kool all heavily targeted the youth market via “Spring Break” campaigns in Florida and Texas. For example, the Kool Playboy Spring Break at Daytona Beach included 35 Playboy Bunnies who helped distribute 180,000 sample packs alongside 34,000 posters – autographed by the Bunnies.

In the early 2000s, Brown & William’s Kool and RJ Reynolds introduced youth-appealing sweet and fruity flavors to their menthol cigarettes (e.g., Mocha Taboo, Caribbean Chill, Midnight Berry).



Menthol Advertising Targeting Black Americans:

Few Black Americans smoked menthol cigarettes before 1960. Recognizing that smoking is more prevalent among lower-income people, major tobacco companies identified an opportunity to increase sales by targeting “poverty markets.” To execute this plan, urban communities were deluged with menthol cigarette advertisements on billboards, buses, and subways, and in stores. Free sample “starter packs” and discount coupons were liberally distributed in urban markets. Black newspapers and magazines (Ebony, Essence, Jet) became filled with tobacco advertisements, mostly for menthol brands. Prominent Black professional athletes appeared in menthol advertisements, as did famous Black singers and entertainers.

In the early years, menthol advertisements simply replaced White models with Black models, but quickly transitioned into those more culturally resonant in Black communities. For example, in the 1970s, menthol marketers adopted the imagery of the Black Power movement. To burnish their image within the Black community, tobacco companies supported dozens of Black organizations such as the NAACP and the Negro College Fund, while menthol advertisements celebrated Black culture by commemorating Black History month. To suppress criticism, payments were made to influential Black leaders, many of whom spoke glowingly of the noble generosity of tobacco companies while accusing critics of being paternalistic.

In response to criticism that they targeted Black consumers, tobacco executives defended themselves by falsely and shockingly asserting that the surge in menthol use was due to innate biological flavor preferences among Black people. In reality, the popularity of menthol cigarette brands was purposefully engineered by marketing departments that recruited Black consumers to become customers.



Menthol Music Themed Advertising:

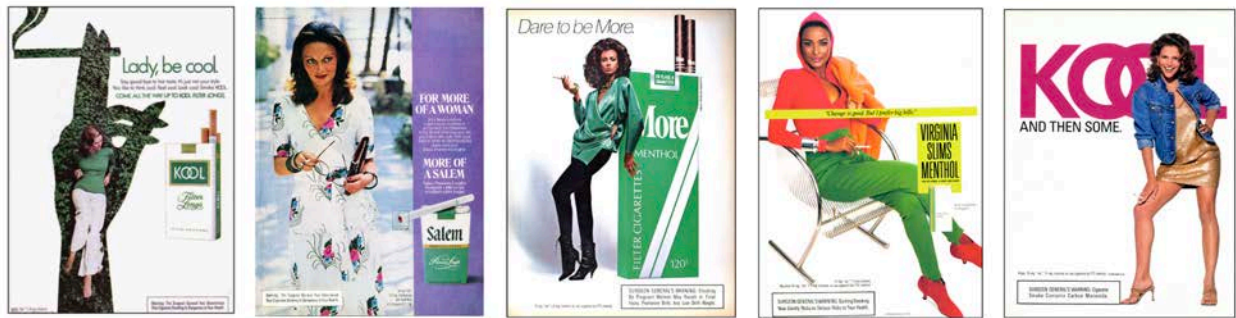
All major menthol cigarette brands (Kool, Newport, Salem) integrated music themes within their advertising campaigns and sponsored numerous music festivals. Festivals not only promoted the brand name but also associated menthol brands with coolness, relaxation, and entertainment. Importantly, festivals provided an opportunity to hand out thousands of free samples and deploy other promotional strategies.

Jazz dominated as the music genre of choice by tobacco companies in the 1970s and 1980s. Jazz was chosen because it was especially popular among Black Americans. Kool took over the Newport Jazz festival, renamed it the Kool Jazz Festival, and held large concerts across America, especially in cities with large Black populations. More recently, menthol brand-sponsored concert series (e.g., Kool MIXX, Marlboro's Vinyl Vibes, Salem's Stir the Senses) featured youth-oriented musical genres such as rock n' roll, hip-hop, and rap.



Menthol Gender Targeted Advertising

Since the 1930s, menthol cigarette marketers have prioritized women, initially because women were early adopters of menthol brands. Campaigns such as Kool's "Lady, Be Cool" and Salem's "For More of a Woman" were uniquely targeted to women, as were menthol advertisements from "female brands" such as Virginia Slims, More, Misty, Eve, and Capri. Several campaigns featured women's fashions by famous designers who were named in the advertisements, including Dianne von Furstenberg, Calvin Klein, and Bill Blass. Between 1985 and 1990, Black supermodel Iman appeared in a series of menthol Virginia Slims and More advertisements.



Tobacco companies commissioned sophisticated studies of the psychosocial aspects of gender as they related to consumer tastes and used these to predict receptiveness to advertising campaigns. While women-targeted menthol advertisements stressed femininity, male targeted advertisements featured what are typically regarded as virile men, emphasizing their masculinity. Male-targeted advertising portrayed self-confident, often what the industry viewed as characteristically masculine men. Male targeted menthol advertisements also tended to feature activities that marketers consider to be of primary interest to men, including sports (basketball, baseball, football, golf, etc.), auto racing, motorcycle riding, gambling, pool, and bowling.



Menthol Product Innovation: Capsules

Capsule cigarettes contain a sphere of flavored liquid inserted into the filter, which, when squeezed, gives a burst of intense flavor. Introduced in 2007 in Japan by BAT for its Kool brand, they first entered the US market in 2008 under the Camel brand by RJ Reynolds. Capsules are also known as crushers, clickers, kickers, infusers, and squeezers. Most capsule cigarettes, and all sold in the US, contain menthol either as a flavor booster in menthol cigarettes or as an on-demand menthol additive in an unflavored cigarette. Camel, Marlboro, Lucky Strike, Newport, and Pall Mall all offer menthol capsule cigarettes on the US market in 2022. Recently, some brands have begun offering cigarettes with multiple capsules, sometimes delivering multiple flavors.



Menthol & Mint Cigarillos, Hookah, & Traditional Chewing Tobacco

Menthol and Mint varieties are offered in a wide spectrum of non-cigarette tobacco products including cigarillos, chewing tobacco, snus, and hookah.

Cigarillos



Hookah



Traditional Oral Tobacco



Menthol & Mint in the Emerging Tobacco Marketplace

The recreational nicotine marketplace has been rapidly expanding over the last decade with the proliferation of e-cigarettes, heated tobacco, and various forms of oral nicotine delivery. Menthol, mint, and cooling agents are common across these emerging product categories, especially among the large number of youths captivated by e-cigarettes. Among current youth e-cigarette users in 2021, 30.2 percent reported using mint-flavored e-cigarettes and 28.8 percent reported using menthol-flavored e-cigarettes.

e-Cigarettes



Heated Tobacco



Modern Oral Nicotine



Menthol Cigarette Market Removals:

Justified by the public health priority of reducing smoking initiation among youth, numerous countries have banned menthol from cigarettes, including the entire European Union, the United Kingdom, and Canada. Numerous US cities and counties have removed flavored tobacco products from the market. The US FDA has proposed a nationwide removal of menthol cigarettes and flavored cigars from the marketplace. The tobacco industry has undertaken a vigorous lobbying effort to undermine this proposed regulation and is expected to launch a wide array of legal challenges if the FDA issues final rules to remove these products from the market.

The FDA is currently undertaking its review of several million "premarket" tobacco applications from e-cigarette manufacturers. It is yet to be seen whether FDA will authorize any non-tobacco flavored e-cigarettes, including menthol and mint flavors, for continued sale in the United States.

Eliminating menthol cigarettes from the market would reduce youth initiation and promote smoking cessation. Given the proven attractiveness of menthol/mint products among underage youth, a comprehensive removal of added flavors for all forms of recreational nicotine products has a strong rationale. Menthol regulation needs to be crafted carefully, as numerous means of escaping the intent of regulations have been exploited by tobacco companies, such as the use of non-menthol cooling agents. In addition, many types of post-market menthol additives are flooding the market.

On the Following Pages:

- **Menthol cigarette variants of leading brands**
- **Chronological synopsis of the major menthol brands**
- **Synopsis of Black targeted menthol advertising**

11 Marlboro Menthol Brands on the US Market - September 2022

Fresh Flavor



MARLBORO SMOOTH
ICE



MARLBORO MENTHOL



MARLBORO MENTHOL
GOLD PACK



MARLBORO MENTHOL
SILVER PACK

Bold Flavor



MARLBORO BOLD ICE



MARLBORO BLACK
MENTHOL



MARLBORO BLACK
MENTHOL 72'S



MARLBORO MENTHOL
SLATE

Unique Flavor



MARLBORO ICE



MARLBORO MENTHOL
SMOOTH

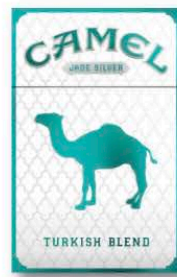


MARLBORO NXT

12 Camel Menthol Brands on the US Market - September 2022



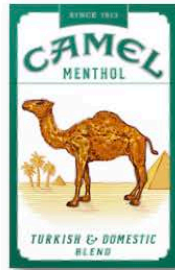
TURKISH JADE
Full-Bodied Menthol



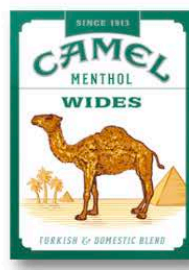
TURKISH JADE SILVER
Refreshing Menthol



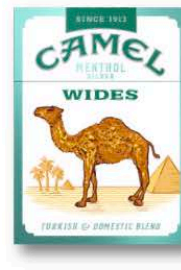
NO. 9 MENTHE
Menthol Turkish And
Domestic Blend



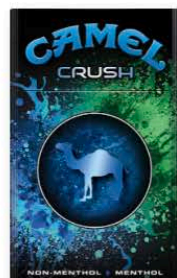
CLASSIC MENTHOL
Original Menthol



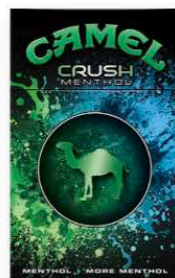
WIDES MENTHOL
Original Menthol



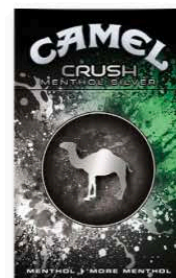
**WIDES MENTHOL
SILVER**
Smooth Mellow Menthol



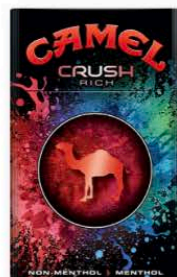
CRUSH
Non-Menthol ► Menthol



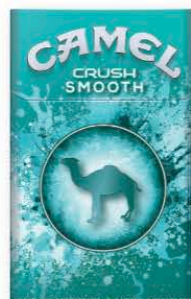
CRUSH MENTHOL
Menthol ► More Menthol



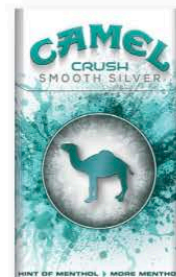
**CRUSH MENTHOL
SILVER**



CRUSH RICH
Non-Menthol ► Menthol



CRUSH SMOOTH
Hint Of Menthol



**CRUSH SMOOTH
SILVER**

7 Newport Menthol Brands on the US Market - September 2022**5 Virginia Slims Menthol Brands on the US Market - August 2022:**

4 Pall Mall Menthol Brands on the US Market - September 2022



Kool & Salem Menthol Brands on the US Market - September 2022



Winston, American Spirit, & L&M Menthol Brands on the US Market - September 2022



Synopsis of Kool Advertising Campaigns from 1933-2022



Synopsis of Newport Advertising Campaigns from 1957-2021



1957-1958



1957-1958



1959-1963



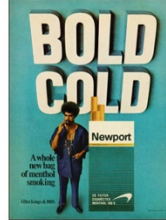
1963-1964



1965



1967



1969-1970



1970



1971



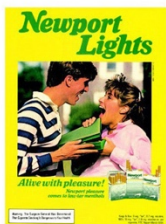
1972



1993



1987-1990



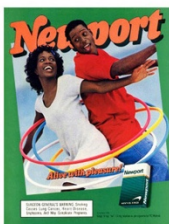
1978-1991



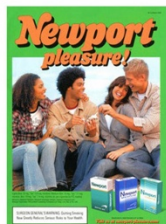
1970s



1980s



1990s



2000s



2010s



2003-2009



2016



2016



2017



2018



2019



2021



Synopsis of Salem Advertising Campaigns from 1956-2006



1956-1964



1963-1964



1963-66



1967-1969



1968



1969-1970



1971-1972



1973-1974



1974-1975



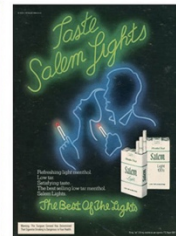
1974-1975



1974-1975



1974-1975



1975-1980



1975-1978



1979-1980



1980



1981-1986



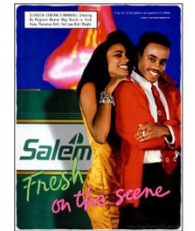
1982



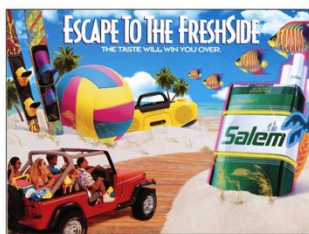
1986



1987-1990



1989-1992



1995



1998-2000



1998-2000



2003-2004



2003-2004



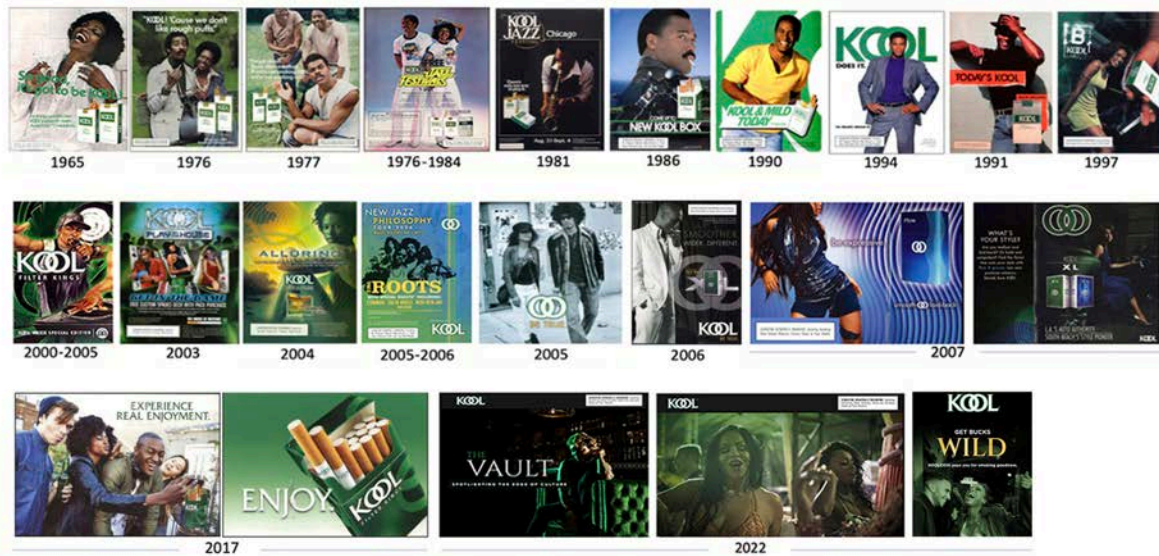
2006



2006

Synopsis of Menthol Black-Targeted Advertisements: Kool, Newport, and Salem

KOOL



Newport



Salem



Synopsis of Menthol Black-Targeted Advertisements

Virginia Slims

1970 1977 1978 1980 1984 2001 2005 2007 2008 2015 2019 2022

More

1976 1982 1983-1986 1984 1985 1987-1988 1988

Marlboro

1972 1976 2016-2018 2022

Belair

1989

Capri

1990

Eve

1973

Max

1976

Misty

1991-1996

Satin

1984

Oasis

1961

Winston

1967

L&M

1971

Vantage

1971 1979

Kent

1971 1973

Pall Mall

1974 1975 2018

Benson & Hedges

1976 1985 1999

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High-resolution images for optimal viewing of the advertising details (1.6Gb PDF):

<https://tobacco.stanford.edu/srita-aha-mentholadvertising>

Low-resolution images for ease of downloading (46Mb PDF):

https://tobacco.stanford.edu/srita-aha-mentholadvertising_low