


Smoke Styling in Contemporary Make-up Advertising

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The negative impacts of tobacco on morbidity and mortality continue on the global stage, with an annual death toll of over 8 million [1]. The WHO's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) has proven to be pivotal in helping combat tobacco [2]. A crucial component of the FCTC is a comprehensive tobacco advertising ban. A major success of the FCTC can, for example, be seen in Western Europe, where direct tobacco advertising has largely been eliminated.

Portrayals of smoking in various media continue to be an issue, ranging from Hollywood blockbusters and network dramas to graphic novels [3–5]. However, another important but overlooked phenomenon is what may be termed 'smoke styling'. This involves the portrayal or use of another product in a manner that is effectively coded as a tobacco product. Examples can include lipstick or mascara held to mimic a cigarette or a cigar.

Examples of this can be seen in the two adverts below. The first of these is for Charlotte Tilbury, a hugely popular brand among young women, in which a woman holds lipstick in the same manner, as though holding a cigarette (Figure 1).

The second image (Figure 2), from L'Oréal, features a woman holding mascara in a manner to mimic a cigar.

These images effectively glamorize smoking, without using tobacco products directly. Nonetheless, in their use of smoke styling, they conflate would-be tobacco products with sexuality, sensuality, confidence, power, beauty, slimness, celebrity, and youth among women. Tobacco manufacturers have long fine-tuned the appeal of cigarette packaging [6]. Such tactics can include slim cigarettes and packet shape, including lipstick-style packaging [7–9]. It is clear that cosmetics manufacturers, situated in the global beauty industry, are adopting reciprocal tactics. Such advertising needs to be 'named and shamed'.

Figure 1. Smoke Styling Imagery From A Charlotte Tilbury Lipstick Advertisement. (2019 advert on Charlotte Tilbury's official YouTube channel)

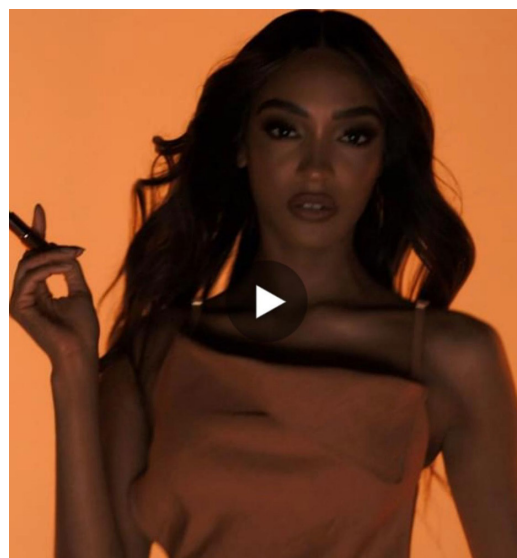


Figure 2: Smoke Styling Imagery from A L'Oréal Mascara Advertisement. (2025 advert on one of Ireland's State television channels, RTE)



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COMPETING INTEREST

None declared.

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